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Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 112

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 112

2nd Session
41st Parliament

Monday
30 October 2017

2^e session
41^e législature

Lundi
30 octobre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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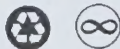
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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



ISSN 1180-2987

Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 October 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 octobre 2017

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This morning, in the Speaker's gallery, we have special guests. First, former member from Windsor–Sandwich in the 36th and from Windsor West in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, Sandra Papatello.

Also in the Speaker's gallery we have a delegation of officials from Shanghai, China, led by Mr. Lixin Wang and Mr. Yiqun Wang. Please join me in welcoming our delegation.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The legendary American journalist Edward R. Murrow provided some great advice to President Kennedy in 1961 when he said that an error doesn't become a mistake until you refuse to correct it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to you for my decorum last Thursday in the House. It's important for me to apologize to you and to all members of this House, because you have a very difficult job, maintaining decorum, and it certainly wasn't assisted by my action on Thursday. So I want to sincerely, Mr. Speaker, apologize to you and all members of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I accept the member's apology and thank all members for maintaining the decorum in this place that I know we all want it to have.

It's time for other introductions.

Mr. Bill Walker: From the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound are the parents of page captain Andy Walker: his mom, Kim Mizen; his father, Kevin Walker, my cousin; and proud grandmother June Mizen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce three people from the Canadian Nuclear Association here today: Sara Forsey, Ed Mischkot and Michael Sung. I'll be meeting with them later on in the day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to welcome a couple of guests of page Dana O'Brien, who is from my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean. Joining us in the members' gallery are Dana's grandmother, Joan Hug-Valeriot, and family friend Sarah Greene. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome, in the west members' gallery today, David Tanel and Bob Scott, with the Canadian Nuclear Association.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome to this House today Bruce Babcock, Gary Lima and Jeff Wright, who have joined us from Fanshawe College. Welcome.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I too am pleased to welcome a delegation of members from the Canadian Nuclear Association to the Legislature today. I invite all members to join them for a reception from 5 to 7 this evening in rooms 228 and 230. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would also like to welcome Fanshawe College here. Bruce Babcock, Gary Lima, Jeff Wright, Peter Devlin and Lori Higgs are also here. I invite everyone to their luncheon today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Scott and Bettina Wahl from Waterloo today. They are the parents of Matthew Wahl, page captain today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, would like to welcome the Fanshawe people and remind all members that there's a reception today in rooms 228 and 230. I hope you can all join us.

Also, Speaker, I have two very dear friends of mine, members of the London Ladies Literary League, a book club that has been in existence for decades: Janet Stewart and Carol Brooks. Welcome.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome teachers and students from R.S. McLaughlin Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Oshawa to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome today our page Payton Marsh's mother, Melissa Marsh, and her friend Christine Buonaiuto. Thank you very much for coming.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CASINOS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Serious concerns have arisen regarding Great Canadian Gaming, the company that is the government's hand-picked choice to operate the Woodbine casino. It is alleged that organized crime funnelled questionable money through a BC casino operated by Great Canadian Gaming. Gamblers allegedly—this is unbelievable—brought in hockey bags stuffed with apparent drug money to be washed through the casino.

This has led to a large-scale investigation. The Premier has said she is paying close attention to it. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. Is the government not concerned about getting into business with a company where there's an ongoing investigation under way?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to comment. My understanding is

that the procurement decision was made by the OLG—the government of Ontario was not involved—and that the Great Canadian Gaming company is not part of the BC review, nor are they under any criminal investigation.

The OLG, as I said this morning, has anti-money-laundering provisions in place for all gaming sites throughout the province, and is in compliance with all federal anti-money-laundering rules. The AGCO and OLG conducted rigorous background checks on Great Canadian Gaming as part of the procurement process.

I know that the Minister of Finance has already been in touch with OLG. As I said earlier to the media, we are paying very close attention to this because of what has happened in British Columbia.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, and good morning, Speaker. Back to the Premier: These allegations are exactly why this casino deal must be halted immediately. The fact that the government isn't concerned about these allegations is shocking.

When the casino contract was awarded, the minister told reporters he was “extremely excited” about the deal. But once charges were announced, the minister said that he was not involved and unaware. If the finance minister didn't know about it, then he's in dereliction of his duty. If he did know, then why did he tell the media he wasn't aware?

Speaker, we need to get to the bottom of this. Did the minister know his hand-picked casino operator is linked to a money-laundering investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's obvious that the members opposite are doing everything they can to deflect from the fact that they don't have a plan, that they have no idea as to where they're going, and they're now—

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They preface their arguments with the term “alleged.” Let me be clear: The integrity of this process is of the utmost importance. My understanding is that Great Canadian Gaming is not under investigation. The opposition allegations are misinformed and ignore the facts.

Both the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and the OLG conducted rigorous background checks as part of the procurement process and the selection of the service provider. The OLG has strict anti-money-laundering programs in place, which are compliant with federal anti-money-laundering rules. The AGCO also performs extensive and independent due diligence into current and past business practices and conduct before registering a gaming operator.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Internal government documents reveal a \$500-million money-laundering investigation in BC. We read about “suspensions of ‘terrorist financing,’” possible organized crime

connections, hockey duffel bags full of cash—tens of millions of dollars in \$20 bills. Who does that?

The RCMP investigation goes back to 2015. They said that there was about \$220 million laundered in BC in one year alone. How can this have all happened under the minister's nose?

We need to get to the bottom of this. To the Premier: What did the finance minister know and when did he know it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, let me be clear: It's my understanding that Great Canadian Gaming is not under investigation. The AGCO and BC regulators are in contact, and they have been throughout the process. But the member opposite is making allegations and is now inferring criminal activity by a public company. I'll leave him to live with that fact.

We on this side of the House have a process in place, and a procurement that is fair and transparent. It has to follow due diligence before it proceeds to where it goes.

I recognize that the member opposite is trying to spin and provide some indication of blame. What we need to do is be fair in the process, and let the process run its due course.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. We are now in the third week of a province-wide college strike. For three weeks, students have been left in flux, not sure if their semester, if their year, if their time in education is going to be lost because of this strike. Mr. Speaker, we can't gamble with our students' education.

My question is for the Premier: Despite the fact this has gone on now for three weeks, why is there no urgency to this? Why has the Premier done nothing to get both sides back to the table?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I absolutely am concerned about this. We want to see students back in the classroom. Both the minister and I have an expectation that both sides will find a way to get back to the table, that that's where the agreement needs to be. It is certainly my intention that no student would lose their term because of this.

The minister has been in conversation with the parties. We are encouraging both sides to get back to the table. But the agreement needs to be forged at the table, and that's why both sides need to get back to the table and get that agreement signed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier says that she's concerned, but she's done nothing for three weeks to get both sides back to the table. We need more than concern. This strike has been called “anxiety-inducing” for many students needing to complete their semester.

Just for the Premier to appreciate the urgency of this, let me share a story from Morganna Sampson, president of the Fanshawe Student Union, and what she told the media, that students in trade and apprenticeship programs

are at particular risk. Those students rely on employment insurance while in school, but that funding has been halted during the college strike. Sampson said, "They're left without a job, without schooling, and without funding to live off of"—a very precarious situation.

Why isn't the Premier doing more? Saying you're concerned is not enough. I want to know what the Premier is going to do to get both sides back to the table immediately.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I want to begin by saying that this is a very troubling strike situation. We are very concerned about it. I sure would love to know the plan they have to get both sides together. I have been meeting with—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Be specific.

Mr. Lorne Coe: You're playing games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Whitby—Oshawa will come to order. I've been standing for a few seconds now. And the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, come to order.

A refresher: When I stand, you stop everything.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Both the Premier and I are very strongly encouraging talks to get back in action—

Interjection: You're doing nothing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If we want to play that game, I'll win. We're going to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been very clear that we want to get both sides back to the table. That's where the solution will be found. In the meantime, I'm meeting with several student groups, including Morganna Sampson from Fanshawe College, and we're making sure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're making sure that students have the information they need to get through the strike. This is a very difficult situation. We are hoping it will be resolved soon.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I knew, the person would be warned.

Final supplementary? The member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. Back to the Premier: I have to say, as a former part-time instructor in the college system, I have to give this government's answer a failing grade to date.

Colleges are trying to reassure students that there's a plan in place to save the semester. However, OPSEU states that the plan hasn't been shared with faculty. In

fact, they say that there hasn't been any consultation at all about saving the semester, and that's certainly not reassuring to anyone involved.

Can the Premier explain why there have been no consultations to save the semester? And if there is a plan, can she share it with us today? These students deserve that peace of mind.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Every college is working on contingency plans and the ministry is involved in contingency plans for those in apprenticeship programs. I was pleased to see that Morganna was quoted on the meeting that we had. She said it went extremely well, that it was very productive: "Now that we've had these meetings," we're sure the government is "looking out for us."

That is a student leader speaking about what this government is doing to support students through this process.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. On Tuesday, October 3, the Minister of Health told this House, in response to my colleague's question about severe hospital overcrowding, that the NDP was fear-mongering for partisan political reasons. On Thursday, October 5, Hamiltonian Jim Sanford was lying on an ambulance stretcher inside a packed ER crying in pain for more than four hours before the paramedics gave him pain medication. No one from the hospital was available.

Does the Premier still think that shining a light on hospital overcrowding is fearmongering?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

1050

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm certainly happy to look into that specific occurrence.

It is the obligation of all of us in the health care system to provide the highest quality of care. That's precisely why—in terms of capacity challenges because of a growing population and an aging, more complex population—we're increasing the number of acute-care beds by 54 in Hamilton alone. There's an additional set-aside of additional acute in-patient beds, should Hamilton or that entire LHIN require them, as we go into the flu season.

It's important to recognize that the majority of hospitals in this province do not have capacity challenges, but where they do exist, we are making the necessary investments to ensure that the beds are available.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Premier: Jim's family describes his time at Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton as chaotic. Jim was a cancer patient. He fell at home and was brought to Juravinski after the hospital closer to his home was too full to accept him. The four hours he spent in the overcrowded ER saw him go from smiling and waving to no longer being able to speak. The ER was so overcrowded that Jim's stretcher was parked barely inside the ER's sliding door, which opened every time he moved. His decline in the ER while waiting for

medical care was so fast and stark that medical staff told his family he could die, and soon.

Jim's widow told the media, "An emergency is an emergency. It shouldn't be waiting forever." Why doesn't the Premier agree?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry that this individual had the health care experience that he did at Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton. It is a great regional cancer centre, providing excellent cancer care to Ontarians.

We have a great cancer care system in this province. It's not perfect—just like we have great hospitals across this province, but they're not always perfect.

I'm happy to look into this specific occurrence.

That's why we're making the investments that we are; we're making those investments in cancer care so that—on a global level, we have one of the best cancer care systems in the entire world. In terms of outcomes, we have some of the best cancer outcomes, with regard to survival, in the entire world.

It doesn't mean that—unfortunate incidents such as this may happen. I'm happy to look into this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I wish the minister would listen to my question. I'm talking about the ER, not about the care at Juravinski for cancer patients.

When Jim was finally admitted to the ER, it was into a curtained-off section that his family said was no better than the hallway. "It was so crowded, it just felt stifling," said Jim's daughter. After another three hours, Jim's family became desperate just to get him out of the ER before he died there.

Jim wanted to spend his last few days with his family in his home. Instead he spent hours in an overcrowded ER, in pain, while his family frantically tried to move him somewhere more private.

Jim died four days after this ER visit. His family doesn't blame the paramedics or the hospital staff. They point the finger directly at province-wide hospital overcrowding that has left hospitals with more patients than beds.

What does the Premier have to say to Jim's family today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, of course I'm very sorry and disturbed by the untimely death of this individual, and my heart and sorrow goes out to his family, friends and loved ones.

When it comes to hospital overcrowding, that's precisely why we made the investment that we did—to keep up with those specific hospitals where they're seeing an increased volume in their ERs because we have a growing and an aging population.

Just like the member opposite seemed not to support our investment in the former Finch site, the former Humber River Hospital site, to bring more patients out of hospital to open up hospital beds—I'm still not sure if she supports or doesn't support our investment of \$100

million to create 1,200 new acute-care beds in hospitals across this province, including at the Juravinski site.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Last week, the Premier and her Minister of Health offered Ontario hospitals a temporary band-aid solution to the ongoing overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis in Ontario. Anything helps, but the Premier still doesn't seem to understand the magnitude of the problem. The temporary beds she announced are not nearly enough to reverse the damage from years of cuts and freezes under the Premier and her Liberal government.

For example, in North Bay Regional Health Centre, they have been forced to lay off over 400 front-line care workers, and they often will have to warn their community about bed shortages. They call it "bed crisis days."

The Premier's plan is to give North Bay eight temporary beds. Does she really think that this is enough to reverse the damage of years of underfunding by this Liberal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to the specifics. Just let me say that there have been years of increases to the health care budget in this province under this government. Every single year, funding has gone up across the system.

The reality is that there are system challenges that need to be addressed. It was interesting. On the weekend, I had the opportunity to spend substantial time with Senator Bernie Sanders from the States. We were touring hospitals in Toronto, and it was a great opportunity to have a conversation about what's really working here in Ontario, in our universally accessible, publicly funded health care system, and where there are challenges.

One of the things that really is working is that we are able to plan. We are able to look at where the gaps are and find solutions to those problems.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Sault Area Hospital used the phrase "code burgundy" to describe times when overcrowding was so bad that the code was announced to start the coordinated effort to find extra beds for patients. In January of this year, the hospital scrapped "code burgundy" altogether, not because the overcrowding crisis had gotten better but because it had become meaningless. They were calling it each and every day.

The Sault Area Hospital had the second-highest occupancy rate of any hospital from 2012 to 2016. They peaked at 121% occupancy.

The Premier has offered the Sault Ste. Marie hospital eight temporary beds to solve this crisis. How can the Premier and the Minister of Health be so out of touch with the challenges faced by the Sault Ste. Marie hospital?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: After providing the Sault hospital with an increase of over \$6 million this year in their operating budget—by the way, I think it's the highest in the province—which represents a 4.93% increase to their operating budget this year, we did allocate additional acute in-patient beds, as we did for North Bay, as the member herself has just referenced.

It's important, when we look at the North East LHIN, that there is set aside an additional, as-yet-unallocated 31 beds that will be allocated by hospitals in concert with the North East LHIN in the coming weeks ahead, so we can specifically target those beds where they're needed most, and we can also prudently allocate them in response to what we anticipate will be a severe flu season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Health Sciences North, in my hometown of Sudbury, has been offered 16 temporary beds to address the overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis. Every single day, Health Sciences North is forced to house 30 to 35 sick patients in hallways, TV rooms and anywhere else they can find. The 16 temporary beds offered don't even address the shortage faced by Health Sciences North right now, never mind when flu season hits.

How does the Premier expect these 16 beds to solve the ongoing overcrowding crisis that she has helped create in our hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are allocating additional acute in-patient beds across this province, 1,200 of them. In addition to that, we're creating approximately 600 transitional spaces to provide specialized care for people who no longer need to be in hospital, and 200 in affordable housing specifically for seniors.

1100

But what we won't do, Mr. Speaker—I can only imagine if we took the advice of the NDP when they were in power and they closed 24% of all the acute beds across this province, 13% of the mental health beds across this province, for a total of 9,600 bed closures during a short period of time when they were in power. If we were to take their approach—let alone their minister of cuts, who would have taken, additionally, \$500 million out of health care and education—I can't imagine where we'd be.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. This weekend, the headline read, "A Tale of Duplicity or Ineptitude." No, Mr. Speaker, this was not the title of a new book recapping the last 14 years of Liberal government; it wasn't even a news story about Bill Morneau. It was a National Post headline regarding the latest testimony in the gas plants trial. The article stated that 21 minutes after Laura Miller responded, "I have no records" to a freedom-of-information request about the gas plants, it is alleged that "Laura Miller's 'life partner,' Peter Faist, tried to wipe clean her desktop computer."

That is 21 minutes. Is this the new gold standard for what constitutes open and transparent government with this Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite very well knows, and I think she's been—all members know the rules quite well, that when issues are before the courts, we don't discuss those issues in that manner. I'm glad that she's reading her National Post on Saturday mornings and can read those headlines back to us, but I think she very well knows that there is a live case that is going on as we speak, and we should respect that process. The Legislature is not the place to discuss the evidence that is before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What's troubling for people on this side of the House and the people of Ontario is that it was very clear that those who testified before the justice committee in the last Parliament didn't necessarily have respect for this assembly, and whether it's hockey bags full of money or deleted emails, Pete's Project is back on the stand today in a courtroom down the street.

We learned that, "At one point during the process of clearing the hard drives, Faist emailed Miller to say 'things aren't going well ... may have to wipe them.' She replied, 'Uh-oh.'"

So, Mr. Speaker, "uh-oh." With the history and track record of this government, how can we be sure there aren't any more "uh-ohs" happening right now in that government?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm not surprised that a party without any substantive plan is the one who is going to ask questions like these and try to just read some bits and pieces from a newspaper article and not respect our legal process.

On this side of the House, we have the utmost respect for our court processes, we have the utmost respect for our judiciary and we have the utmost respect for the rules. That is why our government has been focused on making sure we introduce more accountability and transparency, by making sure that we have a directive sent to all political staff that we have mandatory training programs. We have appointed chiefs of staff who are accountable for record-keeping, and we have improved archiving requirements, not to mention that we have passed the accountability act, which prohibits the wilful deletion of records and creates a penalty for doing so. That's the record of this government, and we're proud of that.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. According to statistics published by the Ministry of Transportation, the number of deaths caused by distracted walking did not increase at all between 1993 and 2012. This means there's little or no evidence that the advent of cellphones has led to an increase in deaths due to distracted walking. However, these MTO statistics

show that deaths due to distracted driving nearly tripled during the same time. The OPP says that distracted driving now causes more deaths than impaired driving or speeding. So why is the government contemplating a bill that treats distracted walking as the problem and not distracted driving?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think the member from Parkdale–High Park knows that this is a private member's bill that she's alluding to that I anticipate will be brought forward at some point in the Legislature.

On the larger topic that was embedded in her question: I think she knows that on this side of the House our Premier and our government have moved forward aggressively in targeting distracted driving, impaired driving and a whole host of other initiatives that we've undertaken through two pieces of legislation, Bill 31 and Bill 65, that have passed here over the last couple of years.

Just a few weeks ago, the Premier and I announced that we're going forward with additional proposals to toughen some of these sanctions, Speaker. For the last 16 consecutive years, the province of Ontario has ranked first or second across North America for road safety. But we know that our work is not done. That's why the ministry is focused exclusively on making sure that we have the toughest penalties for those behaviours that are not acceptable, and we're going to keep working hard to make sure that we get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm sure that the Minister of Transportation was very well aware of this private member's bill coming forward and, in fact, vetted it.

My question is back to the Premier: Last week, the group Friends and Families for Safe Streets organized a vigil at Toronto city hall to remember the 54 people who have died this year alone from traffic violence. There was also a ghost bike ride for David Delos Santos, who was killed by a truck driver after dropping off his daughter at school. He did nothing wrong.

Drivers who commit offences that seriously injure or kill vulnerable road users face no meaningful consequences. They can simply mail in a cheque. Instead of bills that blame victims, will the government pass my Bill 158, the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act, and take real action to protect pedestrians, cyclists, seniors and children who share our streets?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm going to do my best to give the member from Parkdale–High Park the benefit of the doubt, Speaker. I know that she is an advocate for making sure that we work collectively and collaboratively to protect our most vulnerable road users.

But that member also knows that just a few days ago we announced as a government that we would be moving forward with a number of legislative proposals that will be introduced later this year that would also include in them, if passed, the toughest penalty in the Highway Traffic Act: careless driving causing bodily harm or death on the road, which would contain up to a \$50,000

fine, if convicted, and also no more than two years in jail. Again, it's the toughest penalty in the Highway Traffic Act, if passed.

In addition, we continue to have crackdowns on distracted driving and impaired driving, both alcohol and drug impaired driving, Speaker. We continue to drive home the message that we have to protect our most vulnerable road users. That's why we passed Bill 65 with respect to safety in school zones and community safety zones, and it's why we're working closely with the OPP and others—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. We know the minister has been a tireless advocate for the establishment of Rouge National Urban Park for nearly 30 years. He's planted trees there endlessly alongside some of our other caucus members and many supporters of the park.

Protecting green spaces in one of Canada's most populated and culturally diverse metropolitan areas, the greater Toronto area, is no easy task, but it's one of great importance to our government. We have been leaders in establishing and expanding protected areas: part of the greenbelt, the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work together with municipalities to ensure that our cities and towns grow sustainably. Everyone can enjoy the natural beauty of our province to hike, bike, swim, paddle and even camp.

Minister, a week ago you were at Bob Hunter Memorial Park to make an important announcement. Could you please provide us with more information about this great news?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member and all the members of the Legislature who attended that really emotional event that we had about a week or so ago. Public representatives from all three levels of government, indigenous leaders and staff from Parks Canada were there, as well as advocates, community groups and environmental groups that have worked on this matter for almost 30 years.

Indeed, this is rather personal to me because I was a staffer here 30 years ago when I began working on this issue. So I want to thank the Premier and my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure for allowing me to carry this file over the finish line.

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It really was an honour for me to be there a week ago Saturday to make this announcement that, indeed, we are transferring 1,600 acres of environmentally sensitive lands to Parks Canada, so that future generations will enjoy this natural oasis in the middle of our city.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for that information and, once again, for being such a strong champion

of this park and ensuring the condition for ecological integrity was met. I know it's a tough fight, but it was worth it to see that the incredibly diverse natural area receives the strongest protection.

It is my understanding that the park is now close to 80 square kilometres, which is 23 times bigger than Central Park in New York and 50 times bigger than High Park in Toronto. The park now links Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges moraine, and it is Canada's first-ever national urban park.

The Canadian and Ontario governments, indigenous peoples, environmental groups and farmers all worked together to make the most of a rare opportunity to protect precious green space to the edge of the country's biggest city for generations to come.

There are so many exciting things for us to explore and to do in the Rouge. What is the best way for individuals and families to enjoy the park and learn about its many treasures?

Hon. Brad Duguid: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to rise in the House and to talk about the Rouge National Urban Park. I want to say thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, as well as the member from Scarborough Centre, who was there as this park was being transferred to the federal government in terms of the final details.

Elder Sault, who was there, said that Rouge Park has retained its splendour, and indeed it has.

Students at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus have developed the Rouge app—la Rouge. This app was developed by entrepreneurs who are part of a program called The Hub, which is an incubator that's developing innovative programs. They have developed a remarkable system to navigate the park and to explore its splendour.

I would encourage all members of the House to download this app and to visit the Rouge National Urban Park.

Thank you so much to the member for Scarborough Centre—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'd like to remind the Minister of Education: When I stand, you sit.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: He stands; you sit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need a parrot.

New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. My constituents find it outrageous that environmental approvals from two decades ago could be used to open a mega-dump on the ED-19 site. Much has changed in 20 years, including legislation actually protecting the environment.

Minister, you recently received three expert reports from the Canadian Environmental Law Association documenting changes to site conditions. The township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal has declared itself an unwilling host.

The minister's predecessor committed in writing that "a change in circumstances or new information that wasn't presented at the time of approval" would allow for reconsideration.

The minister now has both. Will he commit to revoking those stale-dated approvals or sending this matter to the Environmental Review Tribunal?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, our ministry's priority is to divert as much waste from landfill as we possibly can. I can say that, through our waste diversion efforts, we're keeping about three million tonnes of waste out of landfills every year.

But we recognize that solutions need to be put in place for waste that can't be diverted. I can say that currently this group is required to undertake consultation and studies in order to determine if the project can be done in a way that is protective of both the environment and of human health.

The proposal will be subjected to a number of ongoing assessments and review, and the organization will need to continue to consult with the public and with all stakeholders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: A dump has never opened in Ontario with such outdated approvals. It's unprecedented and hardly the legacy this minister or this Premier would want.

Remember, they were granted for a municipally operated landfill for waste from Leeds and Grenville, not a private mega-dump for garbage from across Ontario. The minister has also heard from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, who were never consulted. Grand Chief Benedict wrote to remind the minister of his constitutional duty, upheld by the courts, to consult First Nations on such matters.

Speaker, there are many compelling and, frankly, constitutional reasons for this minister to get off the sidelines. Will he use his authority to scrap those historic approvals and guarantee no landfill activity at ED-19 without a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, I go back to the fact that there is a need across Ontario for places to put landfills, places to locate dumps, for those things that can't be diverted away and reused. Just a while ago, my predecessor introduced a bill around the circular economy because it's built on the adage that one person's garbage is another person's treasure. That's key to moving forward.

The circular economy will make sure that as little material as possible ends up as waste in landfills. We are committed to building a greener Ontario. That's why we have the Waste-Free Ontario Act. Through this act, we'll be saving municipal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last week's release of the Premier's long-delayed long-

term energy plan confirmed what the NDP has been saying since March: The Premier is forcing ratepayers to take out a massive payday loan to artificially and temporarily lower bills before the election. After the election, the bills of Ontario families will rise even higher and faster because they have to pay back an extra \$40 billion in interest and principal. But even I was surprised by the sharp rise in hydro rates for industrial consumers, which the Premier had excluded from her \$40-billion borrowing scheme.

Will the Premier explain why, under her plan, northern industrial hydro rates will rise almost 40% between 2019 and 2025?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It is important for us to continue to talk about the long-term energy plan, the fair hydro plan and, of course, large industrial consumers. We recognize the importance of electricity prices for businesses, and this is reflected in many government programs that help businesses make electricity more affordable, such as the ICI program, Save on Energy for business, the industrial electricity incentive, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program and the Industrial Accelerator Program, just to name a few.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in the long-term energy plan, the 2017 long-term energy price plan outlook for industrial consumers reflects an average increase in line with inflation—in line with inflation going through right until the end of this long-term energy plan. This plan is working for our large industrials, and we'll continue to offer these programs to help to lower their rates even more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Under the Premier's hydro plan, rates for manufacturers, auto-makers, steel mills and other large power consumers will rise by 30% in just six years. Northern industrial customers will be hit even harder; their rates will rise almost 40%. Instead of getting private profits off hydro bills and bringing Hydro One back under public ownership, the Premier is putting even higher burdens on Ontario's manufacturing sector and northern industries.

Will the Premier tell us how many industrial jobs will be lost because of her privatization plan for our hydro system?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're continuing to see job growth in our industry thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Economic Development and Growth and the Premier. Also, we have just said the long-term energy plan price outlook for our large industry reflects an average increase in line with inflation. It's also important to say that the electricity price for industrial electricity consumers in Ontario is lower than the average price in the Great Lakes region, as reported by the US Energy Information Administration. Rates in Ontario remain competitive—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned. The Minister of

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned. Any other smart-aleck remarks?

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear: Rates in Ontario remain competitive with other Canadian and American jurisdictions, with prices in northern Ontario in particular among the five most affordable jurisdictions on the continent. That's thanks to the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, something that we continue to work with all of our northern industries on.

We're working for all consumers, large and small, in this province.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Recently, a number of women I know took to social media to share deeply personal stories of sexual harassment and violence with the hashtag #MeToo. These two simple words have sparked more than—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To who?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Sorry, to the Minister of the Status of Women.

These two simple words have sparked more than 1.7 million tweets in 85 different countries. The sheer volume of these stories exposes just how widespread sexual harassment and sexual assault are in our society.

We know that if we do not talk about important issues like sexual violence and harassment, we will allow them to go unnoticed. We give way to silence and the status quo. We know there is a very real stigma around reporting sexual violence and harassment which prevents some survivors from coming forward.

This campaign has opened a critical conversation. Can the Minister of the Status of Women share with us what she is doing to help keep this important conversation going?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to thank the member from Davenport for this very important question. As the Minister of the Status of Women, it's my goal to do everything I can to ensure that women feel safe in this province. But the disturbing accounts of sexual harassment and assault sparked by hashtags like #MeToo tell a different story.

The reality is that women in our province and country, and around the world, are being harassed and assaulted every day. These two simple words have become a rallying call to stand up to gender violence. My colleague is right: We must change attitudes on this troubling issue.

I want the women of Ontario to know we are listening. We moved forward with the groundbreaking It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment to shed light on this serious issue, and our multimedia award-winning public education campaigns have sparked discussions.

More work needs to be done, and this government has a plan. I'll explain more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. Hashtags like #MeToo have shone a light on how prevalent sexual violence and harassment are in our homes, workplaces and communities. While #MeToo was about opening the conversation, the hashtag #WhatNow is a call to action.

We know that racialized and indigenous women are even less likely to report instances of violence. Women are showing enormous courage and strength by speaking out, and we need to make sure they know we are listening.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us what the government is doing to fight sexual violence and harassment in Ontario?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: We know that campaigns like #MeToo are exposing serious problems in our society. There's no question that gender-based violence is far too widespread and has a devastating impact on survivors and their families.

That's why we're working hard right now on the Gender-Based Violence Strategy that addresses sexual harassment and violence. Our overall Gender-Based Violence Strategy will connect work from the sexual violence and harassment action plan, the ending violence against indigenous women human trafficking initiatives and update the Domestic Violence Action Plan.

The strategy aims to stop domestic violence, improve supports to survivors and strengthen the justice system's response.

My ministry, along with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, held engagement sessions with the help of trauma counsellors to hear directly from those with experience of gender-based violence. We listened to survivors and experts, and used their voices to inform the strategy and are releasing it. Our next steps toward ending gender-based violence will be included in our plan.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. In the Auditor General's 2016 report, the auditor raised serious concerns about the government spending taxpayer dollars on partisan ads. In the report, the auditor said the government's infrastructure ads were "self-congratulatory and aimed at ensuring that the government gets credit for its potential future spending...."

Your latest online infrastructure ads brag about projects in Toronto and Brampton. They are exactly what the auditor said should not be happening.

I know the Minister of Energy has chosen to ignore the auditor, but will the Minister of Infrastructure listen to this independent officer of the assembly and stop spending taxpayer dollars on partisan ads?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to direct the supplementary to the President of the Treasury Board.

We're making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history: an unprecedented \$190 billion over 13

years. This investment is having positive, life-changing impacts across the province.

Whether it's a new school or a new hospital, people in Ontario have a right to know about the work we are doing to build better communities, and so we've started a highly localized public awareness campaign to shed light on how our historic investment will affect people in their everyday lives. Showcasing impactful projects is a measure of transparency that helps pull back the curtain on the specific details of our government's plan.

As always, we are in full and complete compliance with the government's advertising act, one of the most stringent in the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, the people in Ottawa should know that we're making a \$200-million extension to the Ottawa heart institute. That's important to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Did you even listen to the question?

Ever since the government watered down the auditor's oversight of government advertising—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Uh-oh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful. It might have cost you.

Please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Ever since the government watered down the auditor's oversight of government advertising, the Liberals have been spending millions on partisan ads. Instead of raising awareness about the fentanyl crisis or signs of human trafficking or child abuse, the government chooses to brag. The government isn't using these ads to help Ontarians; they're spending taxpayer dollars to promote the Liberal Party.

Will the minister tell Ontarians how much of their money his ministry is wasting on these partisan ads?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I do need to point out that Ontario remains the only jurisdiction in Canada that has legislation banning partisan advertising. We passed this—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: So funny. What a joke.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you. We passed this historic legislation because we are against government using taxpayer dollars for partisan advertising. That was our position in 2004, and that is our position now.

As part of the 2015 budget, we modernized the Government Advertising Act to give the Auditor General oversight of additional areas of advertising, including digital advertising, transit advertising and movie theatre ads—something that the AG herself actually asked for. The legislation was also amended to provide a clear definition of partisan advertising—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Liberals have had 14 years to make changes to improve the lives of workers in this province, and yet now, in the final days of this government, it's clear what this Liberal government is willing to do does not go far enough.

New Democrats tabled amendments at second reading that ensured that every worker in this province would have the right to join a union in a straightforward process, not just a few preferred sectors. The Liberals voted against that.

New Democrats tabled amendments to give every Ontarian the right to take three weeks' vacation after one year, not after an unrealistic five years with the same employer. The Liberals voted against that.

The New Democrats' amendments would have provided for five paid leave days for every worker in this province and 10 days for victims of domestic violence. The Liberals voted against that.

Why is that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, the public exercise that accompanies Bill 148 has been very, very thorough. We had the Changing Workplaces Review. It took about two years. We had two excellent advisers travel the province and talk to business, talk to workers, talk to organized labour, talk to a number of groups that have to do with changing workplaces—with the way that workplaces have changed over the years.

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As a result of that, we took that out after first reading, because we knew we needed to get as much input as we possibly could on this issue. We took the advice we received from labour, from business, from those people who advocate for workers, and we changed it. We brought in amendments. Those amendments were voted for at the committee level.

It's been through debate in the House again. It has been sent back to the committee. I'm pleased to report today that it's going to the committee today, and the public will have another chance to tell us what their concerns are, what they liked with the bill and what changes we should make. This has been a very extensive process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I think the public has told us: Card-check was the number one priority for everyone.

New Democrats committed to a \$15 minimum wage two years ago. We tabled an amendment that would have actually seen servers in restaurants make the same money as security and other workers in this province by making the same minimum wage, not a two-tiered minimum wage. The Liberal government voted against this. How is that fair?

Will this government, during this committee process, commit to the same minimum wage for liquor servers in restaurants and for young people?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: About 30% of the people in the province of Ontario make less than \$15 an hour. About half of those are between the ages of 25 and 64.

Those are the years when you're trying to raise a family. It's where you're buying clothes for the kids, and it's where you're trying to pay your rent. It's those important years when you're trying to raise a family. What we've done as a result of this is that we've brought in a suggestion that the minimum wage should go to \$15 as of January 1, 2019.

As I remember, two years ago, we couldn't get the NDP to talk about the minimum wage, Speaker; I think a little history lesson is involved here. Two paid sick days, three weeks of vacation after five years of employment with the same employer, equal pay for work of equal value—if you're doing the same work as someone you're standing next to, you should get paid the same—

Ms. Catherine Fife: How about the college workers? How about the faculty?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is warned.

You have one sentence.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This is the largest advance in Ontario's history. Thank you, Speaker.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est également pour le ministre du Travail. Minister, in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier, people talk a lot about Bill 148, and I also have questions about it. I think we know that constituents are quite interested in the increase to a \$15 minimum wage, increasing notice for employees in scheduling, equal pay for equal work, paid sick days for everyone and changes to the unionization process.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs travelled through Ontario throughout the summer, but this was unusual, because usually committee work happens after second reading. Can the minister tell us again why the bill was referred to committee after first reading, and how that decision impacted our plan to make workplaces fairer?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Vanier for this excellent question and also for the advocacy she has brought to this bill.

When we brought in the act, as I was saying in the previous answer, we knew it was going to affect a lot of people in the province of Ontario. We needed to get that input. We needed to get it from business, from labour and from poverty advocates. That's why we sent it out to the committee at the first chance we had. At first reading, it went out.

That committee travelled to 10 cities across this province. They heard almost 200 presentations. They received approximately 1,000 written submissions from families, workers, employers, labour unions and health professionals. What we did is we took that information, and we proposed amendments to reflect what the committee members had heard. They addressed some of the concerns of small business, they addressed some of the concerns of workers, but they maintained the protections that were in the act.

Speaker, we know bold steps are needed to support Ontario's workers and their families, and that is exactly what Bill 148 is doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci, monsieur le Ministre. This process has been very exciting, I think, for Ontario, to see how workplaces will become fairer if the bill passes.

One issue in particular that interests me is the need to expand job-protected leave for victims of domestic and sexual violence. We know that it's important for victims to have the time and the support they need to actually deal with tremendously difficult circumstances. I believe it's really the right decision to amend Bill 148 to establish a new separate leave for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Now that second reading debate is complete, I look forward to hearing more about what we can do to further strengthen Bill 148. Can the minister please inform the House what we can expect to see in the coming weeks?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member from Ottawa–Vanier. I had hoped to have the support of the whole House, but despite the opposition voting against our plan to make workplaces in Ontario fairer, I'm proud that Bill 148 passed second reading. It has been referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Today, actually, marks, as I said, the beginning of the second round of public hearings, where the committee will hear from over 50 groups, unions and businesses in the province, groups that really represent all walks of Ontario life. There's also the opportunity now for the public to send in some written submissions to the committee to make sure they're heard.

In the first go-around, the input we received from Ontarians was really valuable and really helped to formulate some of the amendments. It helped inform our decisions. I look forward to doing exactly the same, Speaker, with the input we receive. We're not going to back down from this. We're going to make it better and we're going to make Ontario's workplaces fairer.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Energy. You've recently re-announced a commitment to refurbish our nuclear fleet, and this is good news. We remain committed to this clean baseload and effective form of energy. What we don't understand is why you continue to sign exorbitant green energy contracts. The reality is, your government could have cancelled a number of contracts without penalty, which would have provided relief from the 300%-plus rate increases which your government is solely responsible for.

The total cost of your green energy experiment is going to cost \$133 billion. If you had put the people of Ontario first instead of your own partisan political needs and cancelled these contracts, it would have saved millions of dollars.

Through you, Speaker: Will the minister answer to the people of Ontario why you didn't cancel those contracts when you had the chance and why you continue to sign more, having had surplus power currently in our province?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the opposition doesn't have a plan at all for the energy sector, let alone anything to do with clean and reliable power for the province of Ontario. I know the opposition leader said that he would actually tear up renewable contracts. Do you know what that would do? That would expose us to \$20 billion in lawsuits and costs, and it signals to business that Ontario can't be trusted.

Let's look at what we've done with renewable power in this province. We now benefit from over 90% emissions-free electricity. We are the envy of North America when it comes to the grid that we have. Clean energy initiatives have generated over 42,000 jobs at more than 30 solar and wind manufacturers across the province. We also talked about looking at the LRP II and suspending that contract because we are in a robust supply. But if you would look at the long-term energy plan, you would see that a few years down the road we're not going to be in that robust supply and nuclear—the refurb will continue to provide a lot of that green power for us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Energy: This minister is clearly out of touch. If his government had committed \$133 billion to the refurbishment projects instead of playing politics, these projects would have been in progress, ensuring clean baseload and cost-effective power, while ensuring 60,000 well-paying direct and indirect jobs across our province.

The completion of these projects would have actually resulted in lower energy costs as opposed to the huge increases of 300% that have resulted during your 14 years. These rate increases are forcing closures of schools, cuts to hospitals and long-term-care homes, and the hikes are leaving businesses and households in the dark and forcing hundreds of companies and jobs out of Ontario.

Speaker, through you: Will the minister be straight with the people of Ontario? Will you admit your sale of Hydro One and the debt incurred by your recent unfair hydro act will result in higher rates in the future?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's be clear: The investments that are happening from this side of the House are endless. I never have enough time to talk about the billions of dollars that we're putting into transit, into roads and infrastructure. We continue to build more and more on this side of the House because we're building Ontario up.

When it comes to our renewable industry, it is a success story. As I said before, we're home to 30 solar and wind manufacturers, including Heliene in Sault Ste. Marie, CS Wind in Windsor and Silfab Solar in Mississauga. Ontario trains wind power technicians and other experts in the renewable sector at Fanshawe College, at St. Lawrence College and at St. Clair College. We also

have an industry based in innovation, which we're exporting to other countries and jurisdictions looking to follow our lead on green energy policy. Loraxian in Oakville: renewable energy strategy and knowledge to global markets; SolarWall—Mr. Speaker, it's just endless.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry on a point of order.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I wanted to introduce, in the east members' gallery, two residents of Cambridge: Rich Rees and Lynn LaPlante. Thank you for joining us today.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome members of staff from Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services who are joining us here in the Legislature. Welcome to the Legislature.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that question period is over, pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds—Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change concerning the ED-19 landfill site—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to get a warning.

This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAVE THOMSON

Mr. Bill Walker: Last month, I had the honour of joining the Peninsula Family Health Team at the Friendship Club in Lion's Head to celebrate Dr. Dave Thomson's 25 years of medical practice on the peninsula.

Following a decorated career in the Canadian Navy, Dr. Thomson turned his attention to medicine. He obtained his family medicine specialization in June 1992. Dr. Thomson always likes to tell the story that he received a call from Dr. George Harpur in Tobermory in the early summer of 1992, asking him if he was free to lend a hand on the peninsula. Dr. Thomson said sure, he could try to help out for a little while, and, 25 years later, he is still there.

Dr. Thomson opened his medical practice on the peninsula in September 1992. During his medical career, he has been active in many leadership and community roles in support of the provision of exemplary health care for our residents in our community. Now in his 25th year of medical practice, Dr. Thomson is as busy as ever. He

continues to have weekly patient clinic days in both the Lion's Head and Tobermory sites of the Peninsula Family Health Team. He serves as the medical director for the long-term-care facility in Lion's Head, provides hospital and emergency coverage at our local rural hospital in Lion's Head, provides palliative care home visits, assists monthly with medical surgeries at our regional hospital in Owen Sound, is a regular preceptor for medical students and residents from four medical school programs in Ontario, and provides physician support to the Tobermory Hyperbaric Facility.

Dr. Thomson is the embodiment of a true rural family physician. His practice encompasses entire families in our community, from the youngest grandchild to their great-great-grandfather and everyone in between. Dr. Thomson has made the beautiful Bruce Peninsula his home for over 30 years, where he spends his free time with his wife, Jane, daughters Megan and Emma, and his beloved dog, Seamus.

I invite the members to join me in congratulating Dr. Dave Thomson on his 25th anniversary of providing medical care on the Bruce Peninsula.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to start out today with a big shout-out to the Knights of Columbus in Windsor and Essex county. Twenty years ago, they adopted our local hospice and they've been raising money for the hospice every year since then. It started with a friend of ours, Mike Agius. We used to be involved in the Forest Glade fastball league together. Mike's friend, Bill Fontaine, came down with cancer and his final days were spent at the hospice.

Mike decided to do something to help others going through the same thing. He convinced all of the local councils to get involved, and since then they've raised more than \$300,000 for the hospice. They collected another \$8,500 or so on the weekend. Gale and I were honoured to spend an evening with these community boosters. The bishop of London, Ronald Fabbro, was there as well.

One of the speakers was Andrew Despins. He said that the hospice isn't a place where people come to die—it's much more than that. It's a place where people come to live their final days with the respect and dignity they so much deserve.

Speaker, changing gears, as my time is running out: You can't settle a contract dispute unless you're at the table. I'm asking the government to direct the two sides involved with our community colleges to get back to the bargaining table, tell them to sit down and settle this dispute. Don't suggest it; direct them to bargain, and do it this week. The students deserve nothing less.

STEM GIRLS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: October 11 is International Day of the Girl. On that day, I hosted a STEM girls event at Google headquarters in Kitchener and it was a huge

success: 80 girls from Waterloo region schools from grades 5 to 8 attended the event to promote science, technology, engineering and math.

There are many challenging, well-paying jobs in the STEM field but a smaller proportion of women in the sector. This contributes to a gender wage gap. We know that girls and boys perform equally well in math and science until middle school. For a variety of reasons tied to how the sexes are socialized, we often see girls dropping out of these subjects by high school. Speaker, they need to be encouraged to continue with math and science. Showing them what a STEM career looks like and role models who are successful in this field is one way to do that.

I invited six speakers, all dynamic women in various STEM careers. One produces apps at Google. Another one has a wind turbine tech company. Another is a theoretical physicist. We even had a student there. What followed was a TED Talks-style format. The women shared why they chose a STEM career, what they do in their jobs and what's challenging and rewarding in their sector.

The positive feedback that we received from most students and teachers was overwhelming. Speaker, it was so encouraging to see girls inspired by the work of these impressive women, reminding them that girls can succeed in STEM. We'll do it again next year.

TESSA VIRTUE AND SCOTT MOIR

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House that on Saturday, October 28, the famous Canadian ice dance pair, Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir—the pride of Ilderton, Ontario—set a new world record score, decisively winning the Skate Canada International event held in Regina, Saskatchewan.

I would briefly like to remind this House of the remarkable record of these artist-athletes. Moir and Virtue are Olympic champions. They are three-time world champions. They're seven-time Canadian champions. And they're the youngest pair ever to win the ice dance competition at the Olympics.

This pair has now skated together for 20 years. Both Moir and Virtue received their earliest training at the Ilderton Skating Club, which continues to be a pillar of the community, thanks in large measure to the dedication of the entire Moir family.

I congratulate Scott and Tessa on this most recent win, and I look forward to watching the 2018 Olympic ice dance competition, which will be taking place in South Korea. I know we will all be treated to another stunning performance from our great Canadian skaters.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Our hospitals are at a tipping point. Some of them are so overcrowded that it is starting to impact quality of care. I'll give you the example of Mr. Gratton from my riding.

On May 13, Mr. Gratton fell ill and went to the emergency room. It was determined that he needed a pacemaker and had advanced prostate cancer. As his health continued to deteriorate while he was in hospital, it became clear he needed long-term care.

At any other time, he would have been assessed in the hospital and given options to wait his turn for long-term care—but not anymore. In order to apply for long-term care, he had to leave the hospital.

It was impossible to care for him at home. He needed 24-hour care, oxygen, a catheter. He needed help with transferring, with feeding.

He was transferred to a retirement home with home care. Once at the retirement home, he started to fall out of bed. A few days later, the PSW assigned to his care did not show up. He spent the day unfed, in soiled clothes, without his medication. He was deemed in crisis and was allowed to apply for a long-term-care home.

Not surprisingly, he fell ill again. He was sent to emergency. He had pneumonia, a bladder infection, blood poisoning. His long-term-care bed opened up, but he was too sick to go to long-term care.

Mr. Gratton died in hospital last night.

His family felt that the overcrowding in our hospital meant that they were too focused on getting him out the door, on clearing a bed.

How many other families are treated the same way?

WILSON BUILDING FOR STUDIES IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I rise to celebrate my alma mater, McMaster University, as they open the new humanities building, the Red Wilson building, a 150,000-square-foot facility.

There are two interesting stories behind this. One, of course, is the love and attention and care that Mr. Wilson exemplifies for his alma mater, for which he has added a \$10-million donation, and the other is the support of the students. The year that the decision was made to fund this facility was one when the government, to be frank, had decided not to support any social science or humanities infrastructure—going to engineering and science. But the students at the university wrote over 400 passionate letters to me reflecting on why, after a 30-year struggle and wait, this facility was so essential.

So for students out there who think from time to time, as I did from time to time when I was a student, that you don't have a lot of influence, you really do have.

The students took charge. They really own this building, and I will be there this afternoon to celebrate its opening.

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HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Two weeks ago, there were two accidents in Carnage Alley. In the space of only two days, two tractor trailers flew off the road. Before this,

there were five crashes in six days leading up to the Thanksgiving weekend. As my constituents tell me, it's sheer luck that no one has been seriously injured in the latest accidents in Carnage Alley.

The Premier has had enough time to decide whether her government will take any action to make Carnage Alley safer, but I'm not convinced that this government is taking the danger of Carnage Alley seriously.

First, the Premier made a promise in this House to build a barrier. Everyone understood that to mean the cement barrier in my riding that my constituents were demanding. By the way, Speaker, I have over 4,000 signatures ranging from Windsor to Ottawa demanding that a cement barrier be built.

Then the Premier began walking that promise back, and the transport minister said he was looking into high-tension cables. Cables may be effective against a car, but a large truck would just plow right through them.

Winter is coming, and that stretch is extremely hazardous. Transports will inevitably cross over the grass median and end up in the ditch in the opposite direction. Construction is currently taking place there, on that very stretch from Tilbury to Chatham, so take the time and build the cement barrier.

I want my colleagues here to understand that my constituents and I will not let this matter go. Again, I say, we must build a cement barrier now.

AL CHARRON

Mr. John Fraser: Ottawa South has produced many great athletes. One of the most notable is rugby legend Al Charron. Just this past week, he was named to the World Rugby Hall of Fame.

He has been described as the greatest forward our country has ever produced. He represented Canada four times at the world cup. He played with the Barbarians all-star squad five times. He played professionally in England and France. He played for Hillcrest High School and the Ottawa Irish.

He has never forgotten his local roots. He still calls Ottawa South home, and he continues to be a great supporter of local athletes.

Al is humble; he's a gentleman. He credits his successes as team successes. I know that the member from Nepean–Carleton would tell you he was a big part of the Rowan's Law team here in this Legislature. He continues to be a tremendous champion for the sport he loves and the athletes who play it.

I ask that all members of the Legislature join me in congratulating Al, a really great guy, in this tremendous achievement.

VETERANS MEMORIAL GARDEN

Mr. Jeff Yurek: This past weekend marked the official opening of the Veterans Memorial Garden in St. Thomas.

More than 100 people braved the cold and gathered in downtown St. Thomas for the opening. In addition to the

general public, the crowd was made up of city officials; members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Lord Elgin Branch 41; members of the Elgin Regiment; Mayor Heather Jackson, Warden Grant Jones and MP Karen Vecchio. In addition, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Her Honour Elizabeth Dowdeswell, was there for the opening.

The Veterans Memorial Garden committee, made up of community members, spearheaded the project over the last two years and were able to raise enough money to create the gardens. The hard work of the committee contributed to over \$110,000 raised through their efforts. I want to really thank Herb Warren and his committee for putting this together for the city of St. Thomas and the county of Elgin.

The garden includes the city's Boy Soldier statue recognizing First World War veterans, the city's Second World War/Korean War cenotaph, and a new monument that was created, recognizing those who served in the war in Afghanistan.

In addition, a Vimy tree was planted. A Vimy tree was grown from acorns from Vimy Ridge brought over to Canada, and we now have one of those in St. Thomas.

The committee felt that this garden made sense because it brought together all the monuments throughout the city to one central location.

The new Veterans Memorial Garden provides the people of St. Thomas with more than just a memorial. There's a park to enjoy, and spots to sit and reflect on the contributions made by brave men and women.

I look forward to the first Remembrance Day service, occurring November 11.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to introduce June Mizen, grandma of page Andy Walker. He's the page captain today, and my cousin.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PHONES DOWN, HEADS UP ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 INTERDISANT L'UTILISATION DU TÉLÉPHONE PORTABLE PAR LES PIÉTONS

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit pedestrians from holding and using certain mobile devices while crossing a roadway / *Projet de loi 171, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire aux piétons de tenir et d'utiliser certains appareils mobiles lorsqu'ils traversent la chaussée.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member from Etobicoke Centre for a brief statement explaining the bill.

Mr. Yvan Baker: The Phones Down, Heads Up Act amends the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit pedestrians from holding and using certain mobile devices while crossing a roadway, subject to certain exceptions. The bill also requires that the Ministry of Transportation conduct an annual campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving, with an emphasis on texting and driving.

1701423 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2017

Mr. Coe moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr73, An Act to revive 1701423 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

FAIRNESS IN MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE SALAIRE MINIMUM

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 172, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Welland like to give a brief statement explaining her bill?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to the determination of the minimum wage in Ontario. What it actually aims to achieve is that there would be no exemptions to the minimum wage except expressly for home workers who are currently paid more than the minimum wage and for hunting and fishing guides who are paid for flat rate half and full days.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: And francophone affairs.

Monsieur le Président, si je m'adresse aujourd'hui à l'ensemble de mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative, c'est pour souligner de façon officielle la cinquième édition de la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone.

Cette année, c'est sous le thème « Une langue, mille accents » que nous reconnaissons l'apport des nouveaux arrivants qui ont choisi l'Ontario comme terre d'accueil.

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Comme en témoignent les toutes dernières données du recensement de 2016, la population du Canada et de l'Ontario est en croissance, notamment grâce à l'arrivée d'immigrants dans notre pays. Cela comprend, bien sûr, les immigrants francophones. La vitalité qu'ils insufflent à notre province bénéficie à l'Ontario sur tous les plans.

En apportant avec eux leurs expériences et leur savoir-faire, les immigrantes et les immigrants francophones contribuent de façon significative à l'enrichissement social et culturel de l'Ontario. Leurs talents et leurs compétences multiples soutiennent la vitalité de nos communautés francophones et assurent à notre province un brillant avenir économique.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît l'importance de l'immigration francophone au développement d'une collectivité ontarienne moderne, dynamique, pluraliste et prospère. C'est pourquoi nous gardons le cap sur notre cible de 5 % d'immigration francophone en Ontario et nous entendons déployer les efforts nécessaires de concertation et de mobilisation pour faciliter l'atteinte de cet objectif.

Dans ce contexte, je suis heureuse de pouvoir affirmer que sous le leadership de ma collègue la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration, l'honorable Laura Albanese, l'Ontario a réalisé des progrès notables dans le cadre de sa Stratégie ontarienne en matière d'immigration. Ainsi, nous avons récemment mis sur pied un comité consultatif sur l'immigration francophone dont le mandat est de fournir des conseils sur la mise en oeuvre des 13 recommandations faites par le Groupe d'expertes et d'experts sur l'immigration francophone. Coprésidé par les sous-ministres du ministère des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration et du ministère des Affaires francophones, le comité est composé de hauts fonctionnaires d'autres ministères provinciaux, du ministère de l'Immigration et de la Citoyenneté et du Canada ainsi que d'intervenants communautaires du secteur de l'immigration francophone. Je remercie davantage l'engagement des membres de ce comité, qui trouveront des pistes de solutions en vue d'aider notre gouvernement à atteindre sa cible de 5 %.

Par ailleurs, je rappelle que notre province continue de jouer un rôle de chef de file à l'échelle pancanadienne. L'Ontario a coprésidé le groupe de travail sur le programme Entrée express avec Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada. Nous anticipons que les changements au programme fédéral d'immigration en vue de mieux encadrer la sélection d'une main-d'oeuvre francophone qualifiée vont porter fruit. En 2017, plus de 4 % des nominations par l'entremise du Programme ontarien des

candidats à l'immigration ont été attribuées à des candidats francophones, alors qu'elles s'élevaient à 3 % en 2016.

L'Ontario travaille de très près avec les autres provinces et territoires au sein de la Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne et du forum des ministres responsables de l'immigration pour favoriser l'immigration francophone à l'échelle pancanadienne. À cet égard, je tiens à souligner la tenue du tout premier Forum pancanadien sur l'immigration francophone au Nouveau-Brunswick, où étaient rassemblés, en mars 2017, les ministres fédéraux, provinciaux et territoriaux responsables de l'immigration ainsi que des ministres responsables des affaires francophones. Dans le cadre de ce forum, les ministres ont exprimé leur soutien à l'élaboration d'un plan d'action fédéral-provincial-territorial sur l'immigration francophone hors Québec, à la tenue d'un symposium communautaire et à l'organisation d'un deuxième forum conjoint en 2018.

Ma collègue l'honorable Laura Albanese et moi-même tenons fermement à faire avancer le dossier en étroite collaboration avec notre collègue du gouvernement fédéral, de même qu'avec nos homologues des autres provinces et territoires.

Il est évident que le rôle du gouvernement fédéral est crucial et que l'Ontario désire continuer de travailler de concert avec le ministre de l'Immigration, des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté, l'honorable Ahmed Hussen.

Comme vous le savez, la rétention de nouveaux arrivants compte tout autant que leur recrutement et leur accueil. Nous continuons donc à mettre l'accent sur les services aux immigrants francophones, qui comprennent des programmes d'établissement, de cours de langue et de formation relais pour les nouveaux arrivants.

À titre d'exemple, j'aimerais souligner que nous finançons un portail sur l'immigration francophone par l'entremise duquel 21 partenaires municipaux font la promotion de leurs communautés comme destinations pour les immigrantes et les immigrants francophones. Il va sans dire que nous jugeons exemplaire l'expertise, l'engagement et le dévouement des communautés francophones dans l'accueil et l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants francophones en Ontario.

En outre, nous continuons nos efforts outre-frontières en vue de promouvoir l'Ontario comme destination auprès d'étudiants internationaux et de travailleurs qualifiés francophones en prenant part à des événements internationaux comme la Semaine canadienne, en France, et Destination Canada, en France et en Belgique. D'ailleurs, le projet de création prochaine d'une nouvelle université de langue française dans le centre-sud-ouest de l'Ontario va venir ajouter à l'attrait de l'Ontario pour les étudiants francophones internationaux et pour les immigrants francophones en général.

Dans le même esprit, nous misons sur l'adhésion de l'Ontario en tant que membre observateur de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie pour nous permettre de rehausser la visibilité de la province et de faire valoir les avantages de l'Ontario français auprès des 84 États et

gouvernements membres de l'OIF qui comptent 275 millions de locuteurs francophones.

En tant que ministre des Affaires francophones, mon rôle consiste notamment à veiller à ce que la communauté franco-ontarienne soit bien outillée et que les conditions favorables soient réunies pour assurer sa pérennité dans toutes les régions de la province. Je me réjouis donc de continuer à collaborer avec ma collègue la ministre Albanese, avec les communautés francophones et les partenaires du secteur, autant d'alliés qui jouent un rôle essentiel à l'épanouissement en français de tous les citoyens de nos communautés.

J'invite finalement tous mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative à célébrer cette semaine de l'immigration francophone et à rendre hommage à toutes celles et à tous ceux qui ont choisi de vivre et prospérer en Ontario et pour remercier celles et ceux qui les accueillent et qui les aident dans leur intégration au sein de leur communauté d'accueil.

Monsieur le Président, je vous remercie—

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Vive la francophonie.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: —et vive la francophonie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Responses?

M^{me} Gila Martow: En tant que porte-parole des affaires francophones du caucus progressiste-conservateur, je tiens à féliciter tous les immigrants et immigrantes francophones qui célèbrent la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone.

Dans le rapport annuel du commissaire aux services en français, M. Boileau, il souligne l'importance à maintes reprises de l'absence d'un plan d'action concret en matière d'immigration francophone en Ontario. Il ajoute que les possibilités d'immigration et d'apport économique des immigrants potentiels sont plus grandes et plus grandes. C'est tout l'Ontario, y compris l'Ontario français, qui peut en bénéficier. La situation devient encore plus urgente avec l'objectif, très loin d'être atteint, de 5 % d'immigration francophone, comme la ministre vient de promettre.

Le Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario continue de travailler avec la Ligue des Africains du Canada. Alors que ses membres sont fiers de demeurer en Ontario, ils nous disent qu'ils ont beaucoup de difficulté à trouver des emplois bien rémunérés ou de trouver des services continus en français. Que ce soit au niveau de la santé, agricole ou d'autres, il devient de plus en plus difficile de vivre en français en Ontario.

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Alors que nous sommes rendus à plus de 620 000 francophones en Ontario, c'est important que nous puissions offrir des services et des emplois à nos immigrants francophones.

Notre chef a eu l'occasion de rencontrer récemment l'ambassadeur de France au Canada, Kareen Rispal, et le consul général de France à Toronto, Marc Trouyet, pour discuter de l'immigration et de l'énergie. Il est important de continuer à entretenir de telles relations pour que les francophones reçoivent des services et des emplois une fois qu'ils ont immigré en Ontario.

Je ne crois pas que ce soit assez de se concentrer sur l'immigration francophone. Nous devons aussi aider nos francophiles, dont je suis une.

Nous avons plusieurs résidents qui parlent un français conversationnel. Ces francophiles ont besoin de notre assistance pour améliorer leur français à un niveau assez élevé pour promouvoir l'élargissement des services en français.

L'une des façons dont j'ai décidé de mettre en évidence l'utilisation du français ici à la législature était en collaborant avec TFO, la Télévision française de l'Ontario, sur une vidéo faisant la promotion du programme des pages législatifs à Queen's Park. C'était un très grand succès avec une jeune fille, Maddison, qui va à l'École secondaire catholique E.J. Lajeunesse à Windsor—je pense que c'est une école d'immersion française—et Rachel Colley, qui est la coordinatrice du programme des pages ici à la législature.

Alors, vive les francophiles. Vive le français en Ontario.

Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Responses? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Je commence en souhaitant bonne semaine de l'immigration francophone à tout le monde. Comme il a été mentionné, le titre est « Une langue, mille accents ». Si jamais ça vous tente de rire un petit peu, allez en ligne voir ce qu'Improtéine a fait pour célébrer la semaine de l'immigration francophone. Je vous garantis que vous allez rire.

C'est sûr que du côté du caucus néo-démocrate, on encourage et on soutient l'immigration francophone. On a besoin de leurs expériences, de leur savoir-faire. On sait qu'ils contribuent de façon significative à enrichir tant le filet social que culturel de l'Ontario. On a besoin de leurs talents et de leurs compétences pour soutenir la vitalité de nos communautés francophones et nous assurer un brillant avenir tant économique qu'autre, et ça, à la grandeur de l'Ontario.

Je commence en disant que j'étais très heureuse lorsque le gouvernement a annoncé une cible d'immigration francophone de 5 %. L'Ontario est la province de choix pour une grosse partie des nouveaux arrivants dans notre pays, et c'est seulement raisonnable que le gouvernement se soit donné comme objectif d'avoir au moins 5 % des nouveaux arrivants qui seraient francophones. En ce moment en Ontario, nous sommes 611 000 francophones—

Une voix.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On est rendu à 622 000 francophones, qu'on me dit. Mais, par contre, notre poids démographique continue de diminuer.

Donc, le gouvernement nous annonce un objectif de 5 %. Malheureusement, cet objectif n'a pas été atteint. On parle tout au plus de 2 % d'immigration francophone. Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. Je vais en lire quelques-uns.

En 2010, nous avons eu 3 574 immigrants et immigrantes francophones. En 2011 : 3 400; en 2012 : 2 947; en 2013 : 2 631; en 2014 : 2 089; et en 2015 : 2 061.

Vous êtes capables de voir qu'à chaque année, le nombre d'immigrants et immigrantes francophones diminue. En 2016, on a eu une petite remontée à 2 380 immigrants et immigrantes francophones.

On est loin d'avoir atteint notre but. Je ne sais pas pourquoi le gouvernement annonce que l'Ontario se donne un objectif de 5 % sans se donner d'échéancier, sans se donner de plan d'action et sans en faire la mise en oeuvre non plus. Donc, on a des annonces mais pas d'action pour soutenir ses annonces-là.

Depuis 2010, comme je viens de vous lire, le nombre d'immigrants francophones a continué de diminuer. Pendant ce temps-là, le nombre total d'immigrants et immigrantes en Ontario continue d'augmenter. Je vous dirais que c'est un manque flagrant d'attention et d'action de la part du gouvernement, ce qui est un peu, je vous dirais, ce qu'on revoit souvent dans les priorités francophones : on nous fait des belles annonces, mais sans plan d'action, sans mise en oeuvre et sans résultats.

Donc, lorsqu'on parle d'immigration francophone, il y a tellement plus qu'on pourrait faire. Cet été, j'ai eu le plaisir de participer à la section des Amériques de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Notre sujet était l'immigration. Nous étions au Nouveau-Brunswick. C'était fascinant de voir tout ce que le Nouveau-Brunswick a fait pour s'assurer d'avoir sa juste part des immigrants et immigrantes francophones. Ils font des missions à l'extérieur, quelque chose qu'on n'a toujours pas. Pourquoi eux ont Destination Acadie, Nouveau-Brunswick, et nous, on n'a toujours pas Destination Ontario français? Pourquoi est-ce que ça n'existe encore pas?

Mais, un autre des gros problèmes—le temps va me manquer—c'est d'aider aux immigrants à faire du français leur langue d'insertion. Je peux vous parler du centre interculturel de Sudbury, qui ne reçoit aucun financement du gouvernement provincial, et qui essaie tant mieux que mal, au travers de bénévoles, d'aider les francophones à faire du français leur langue d'insertion, mais sans ressources d'aucune sorte. C'est difficile. Ce que tu as en ce moment, ce sont deux communautés parallèles. On a besoin de faire des ponts entre ces deux communautés-là. Et ça, c'est le rôle d'un gouvernement qui veut remplir ses objectifs, et ce n'est pas ce qu'on a aujourd'hui.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's 627 long-term-care homes play a critical role in the support and care for more than 100,000 elderly Ontarians each and every year;

"Whereas nine out of 10 residents in long-term care today have some form of cognitive impairment, along with other complex medical needs, and require specialized, in-home supports to manage their complex needs;

"Whereas each and every year, 20,000 Ontarians remain on the waiting list for long-term care services and yet, despite this, no new beds are being added to the system;

"Whereas over 40% of Ontario's long-term-care beds require significant renovations or to be rebuilt and the current program put forward to renew them has had limited success;

"Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care;

"We, the undersigned, citizens of Ontario, call on the government to support the Ontario Long Term Care Association's Building Better Long-Term Care pre-budget submission and ensure better seniors' care through a commitment to improve long-term care."

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Eliana.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank Roberta Lamb of Camden East, Ontario, for collecting 700 signatures on a petition to make a moratorium on school closures, retroactive to 2016-17. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Education, Mitzie Hunter, declared on June 28, 2017, a province-wide moratorium on future school closures based on the results of the spring engagement process, stating that the pupil accommodation review process was flawed and should be overhauled; and

"Whereas during the 2016-2017 school year this flawed pupil accommodation review process was used to close schools; and

"Whereas some of these schools are not scheduled to close until the end of June 2018, so that staffing for these schools remains in place for 2017-2018; and

"Whereas it would be consistent with the spirit of the moratorium and the reason for the overhaul of the" pupil accommodation review "process, to stop those closures announced after September 2016; and

"Whereas the 2015 Auditor General's report ... recommends greater funds be put towards maintenance of current schools; and

"Further, whereas the current funding formula does not properly address the needs of schools within rural and northern communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"1. Reverse the closure decisions for all schools where those decisions were made after September 1, 2016;

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"2. Provide fair and equitable pupil accommodation review processes that school boards must follow, recog-

nizing the unique needs of rural and northern communities; and

"3. Review the current funding formula with a goal of developing fair and equitable funding formulae for all rural, northern and urban schools."

I will gladly affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Ryan to take to the table.

DENTAL CARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that was dropped off at my office by Gabrielle and the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer's disease; and

"Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

"Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

"—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

"—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

"—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name, and send it to the table with page Sheldon.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This petition has been submitted by a number of my residents, this time from the Ridgetown area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2009 the Ministry of Transportation received environmental clearance for six lanes of the 401 between Tilbury to Elgin county;

"Whereas the 401 between Tilbury and London was already known as 'carnage alley' due to the high rate of collisions and fatalities there;

"Whereas current work being done on the 401 between Tilbury and Ridgetown will reduce the road to a

single lane for up to three years thus making this stretch a serious safety concern;

"Whereas there have already been four deaths, nine serious injuries requiring hospitalization and over eight collisions this summer within the one-lane construction area;

"Whereas the government of the day pledged to invest \$13.5 billion in highway improvements and has sharply increased the fees for driver permits and licence renewal fees which are used for highway maintenance and improvements;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To commit to upgrading the 401 from four to six lanes and install a cement median barrier from Tilbury to Elgin county."

I strongly approve of this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Rochelle.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to add to the 20,000 petitions I've already presented by adding another 5,000.

"Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government...;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity...;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes" in 2007 but in 2017 "they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day...;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care...;

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment...;

"(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Airika to bring it to the Clerk.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me for petitions. I look forward to doing so.

I have one here to support Bill 109, from my colleague the member for Trinity–Spadina.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we've seen rapid growth of vertical communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

"Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

"Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for residents of high-rise buildings resulting in constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and 'out of service' notices for unspecified amounts of time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Urge the Ontario Legislature to support Bill 109, the Reliable Elevators Act, 2017, that requires the repairs of elevators to be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge the Legislature to address these concerns that are shared by residents" right across Trinity–Spadina and the province of Ontario.

I endorse this petition, sign my name and send it with page Thomas.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: "Expand Public Dental Programs.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer's disease; and

"Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

"Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and

antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

"—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

"—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

"—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario."

I support this, affix my name and send it with page Asma.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to present this petition, and I thank Ashley MacLellan from Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Payton to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas podiatrists treat foot pain and deformities in women twice as often as foot disabilities in men, often due to having to wear high heels in their workplaces;

1350

"Whereas Ontario podiatrists see far too many patients with injuries in the workplace that are entirely avoidable and are caused by wearing footwear that is inappropriate or outright unsafe;

"Whereas clinical evidence demonstrates that wearing high-heeled shoes causes a much higher incidence of bunions, musculoskeletal pain and injury than those who do not wear high heels;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To put their best foot forward, and take swift action to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from dress codes that mandate unsafe footwear in the workplace."

I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, sign it and give it to page Linnea.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 94, Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems), 2017, will make it easier to get convictions for drivers who do not stop when lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended on a school bus; and

"Whereas responsible governments must update laws as new technology is developed; and

"Whereas numerous states and provinces are already leveraging new technology to convict drivers who put children in danger while Ontario falls behind; and

"Whereas municipalities including the city of Mississauga have passed resolutions in support of Bill 94; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has had three years to conduct consultations after a similar bill was initially introduced in 2014 and thousands of children are put in danger each day due to low conviction rates;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call Bill 94 to committee so it can be strengthened with input from the Ministry of Transportation and other experts engaged in ensuring student safety and to pass Bill 94 into legislation in order to protect our children from motorists who disobey school bus safety laws."

I approve of this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Alexander.

KOMOKA PROVINCIAL PARK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the Thames Valley Trail Association for collecting signatures on a petition to remove the new fees from Komoka Provincial Park.

"Whereas Komoka Provincial Park has long served residents and visitors to London, offering free access to beautiful views and numerous recreational hiking trails; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that access to the natural environment helps to reduce stress, improve mental well-being, and lower risks for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart attacks and cancer; and

"Whereas new parking fees ranging from \$5.75 to \$14.50 for daily use of Komoka Provincial Park have been imposed without consultation and without additional amenities to justify the new costs, appearing to be simply a cash grab by the Liberal government; and

"Whereas the lack of bike lanes and bus routes connecting Komoka Provincial Park to London, and the prohibition on roadside parking, requires almost all

visitors to drive to the park and pay to park their vehicles; and

“Whereas the new fees are likely to decrease park visits with negative consequences for community health and well-being;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry eliminate the parking fees introduced in August 2016 to ensure that Komoka Provincial Park remains accessible to residents of the city of London and all Ontarians.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Eliana to take to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I just wish to correct my record. When I answered on la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, I said “centre interculturel francophone de Sudbury,” and it's Contact interculturel francophone de Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Members can correct their record. We thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ONTARIENS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts and to enact three new Acts with respect to the construction of new homes and ticket sales for events / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et édictant trois nouvelles lois en ce qui concerne la construction de logements neufs et la vente de billets d'événements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate on this bill, I wish to inform the House that I have in my possession the list of members who were warned this morning during question period. As we know, the warnings carry over into the afternoon sitting.

Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to have the opportunity to have a full 20 minutes to speak about Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. I've had the opportunity to have a few two-minute hits here and there, so I am glad to be able to expand and expound on some of those points.

I find that most of my remarks begin the same way, and that is to applaud this Liberal government for the title that they have chosen for whichever bill we are debating. Today we're debating the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. That's a wonderful idea. We always should be protecting consumers, and here is a bill that we are supporting. But I have two desks in front of me covered with letters and thoughts to share from my constituency, from members of my community who would like more protection, who would like different protection, who feel that they were not included in this five-schedule piece of legislation.

Focusing on what is indeed in this piece of legislation, as I said, there are five schedules, but 1, 2 and 4 deal with new home construction warranties and the real estate sector. I might speak a little bit later about Taron at length, depending on how we are for time, but essentially, Taron is something that the government has had 14 years to fix, and repeatedly they have refused to do so, despite countless consumer complaints. Unfortunately, this is kind of a detail-free, enabling piece of legislation. I don't think that there is any reason to believe that those minor changes are going to result in any kind of changes that will finally give new home buyers the protections that they need and that they deserve. But we will come back to Taron in a little bit—well, maybe we will; we'll see how we are for time. Like I said, I've heard from community members and I want to bring their voices here, and not just say the same thing we've been saying for 14 years, which is that we need a fulsome review of Taron, and we need to see the kind of changes that would actually have an impact on homeowners.

Schedule 3: We're glad to see that this government is bringing forward protections when it comes to improving transparency and enhancing consumer protection in the online ticket resale market. Speaker, you may remember that this part of the legislation really came about in the unfortunate wake of the Tragically Hip concert that so many fans—and I know that really everyone in Canada, and certainly in Ontario, are fans. So many were unable to get tickets because of the online bot world, the scalper bots. We all knew it was a problem, but this was such a personal, and unfortunate, chance for us to see just how little competition there is in getting tickets. It's not the way it used to be when you—well, I was going to say, “the way it used to be when you would go online.” I'm sure there was a time before online, but that's a really long time ago—getting tickets and paying what they were worth. In the online ticket resale market, there is an increased amount that you will pay above and beyond what's on the actual ticket, but here, with the scalper bots—we need to fix that.

I was here the other day when the Attorney General spoke at length about this change and acknowledged—and I think we all understand—that sometimes regulation cannot keep up with technology, that technology moves faster than regulation can keep up with. Even if regulation tries, we still are going to find all these loopholes. We had had a bit of a back-and-forth where I said that,

yes, I am more than happy to blame the government for the scalperbot loophole, but we all do recognize that it may have been inadvertent. But here we have the opportunity to fix part of it, and that is very important.

1400

While we're talking about access to the online world, whether it's buying tickets or any other way of participating not just in our online economy, but our online space, I want to take the opportunity to say that our northern community members and our rural community members in Ontario, on a regular basis, advocate for better Internet service, for broadband, for any kind of high speed. There are so many parts of our fine province where folks aren't able to access the online world, and if they do, it's at really slow speeds and it's intermittent service. That's something that we really should fix. It's something that at every opportunity that I've had to talk to a northern or rural community member—at AMO, we hear about it on a regular basis. This is a perfect example. If you don't have high-speed Internet, if you don't have access to the Internet, how on earth can you even get in the game to buy a ticket or to do so many other things that we take for granted not just in the Toronto area but anywhere that has access to high-speed Internet?

That's another part of the conversation. But back to this bill with schedule 3: I made the joke that we need a mortal portal. That certainly isn't a direction that this bill goes in. But regular folks, of course, cannot click fast enough, cannot keep up with the computer or with these high-speed bots. As I've said before and I maintain, everybody needs access to entertainment, Speaker, when they are dealing on a regular basis with this government and with so many of the struggles in our communities.

Schedule 3, though, specifically enacts a new act entitled the Ticket Sales Act. It replaces the Ticket Speculation Act. As I said, it was in response to the public outcry following the sold-out final tour of the Tragically Hip. Specifically, the act stipulates that anyone who sells a ticket on the secondary market at a price that exceeds the face value of the ticket—the seller must be able to guarantee a full refund under certain circumstances, confirm that the ticket is valid, and tickets cannot be resold for more than 50% of their face value.

It explicitly bans bots—and bots, Speaker, for the folks at home that might not be exactly sure what a bot is: It's automated ticket-purchasing software that is designed to go around or circumvent ticket-purchasing procedures of online sellers. That's what a bot is.

As I mentioned, the Attorney General in his remarks the other day acknowledged that sometimes regulation can't keep up with the technology or advances that are happening. I think we intuitively understand that as we look out and we see the changing face of our online world and technologies, there is a lot to keep up with. We acknowledge that. It is a bit concerning that enforcing this ban, even though we all agree it should exist—to ban the bots—is going to be difficult. I think that this, or a different version of this conversation, will be one that we have again in this Legislature as we're talking about protecting consumers.

I'm going to go to some of the letters that I've had. We reached out to our constituency office. They hear on a regular basis from folks needing protections for various things. This bill is called the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. I want to talk about protecting those consumers. Back in the spring, I had brought it to the Legislature's attention that I had been approached by a very engaging door-to-door salesman who had questions about my energy consumption. He wondered if I knew that Ontario was going green, and if I also wanted to go green. We had a very engaging conversation in my driveway. He was a very engaging man who wanted to know if I knew what the government was doing. I said, "Not even on a good day, no." He said, "Well, they're going green. Would you also like to go green?" I said, "Going green? Tell me all about it." And so he did. It was fascinating because the company was not asking me to give them money—it wasn't for them; it was for their going green initiatives. The money would be used to go green on my behalf. So I wasn't giving money directly; they would be investing it in going green initiatives. I don't really know what those would be. Anyway, it was on my behalf, so that I could sleep at night knowing that I was helping to make the world a greener place. Basically, it was so that I could buy my way out of my carbon emissions. I tried not to take it personally, but he told me about how much carbon I was personally emitting. I don't know how he would ever know that. It was very personal. He even offered to come into my home and check out different readings of—I don't even know what he was suggesting. It was a fascinating conversation. I kind of wish that I could go back and see it again. I did not admit that I knew anything about anything. I was just engaged in this conversation and couldn't imagine that a home like mine emitted so much carbon that it weighed as much as an elephant or something like that. It was an elephant-sized amount of carbon emissions that I was responsible for, but I would be able to buy my way out of it with these green credits. It wasn't even that complicated; he was willing to put it on my Enbridge bill for me.

Flash forward: I did not invite him in to check out my water heater or read various other things. I did not sign a binding or expensive scam contract, despite the fact that he was charming and engaging and this was my chance to help with the green initiatives.

What was so concerning and why I brought this up in the spring was not because, "Oh, my goodness, guess what happened to me?" It was, "Oh, my goodness, this happens on a regular basis." They happened to catch me in my driveway, but they were catching people at their front doors and in their homes. People feel responsible to make an environmental difference. They also think that when someone comes to their door with contracts and things to sign—especially newcomers, or if English is a bit challenging, or someone like my grandma, who is going to accept it, perhaps, at face value. If someone tells her that you have to do this, then she might think that she has to do this. This is what is so frustrating: that our

vulnerable neighbours, our seniors, our new Canadians are signing contracts like these every day.

A gentleman in our riding, Mr. O'Boyle, had his heat cut off because he couldn't pay the over \$300 a month that was tacked onto his bill because of these various contracts. His issues were brought to us through his family members, who were doing their darnedest to advocate on his behalf because these expenses had piled up on his Enbridge bill—these third parties that can just tack themselves on, and you've got to pay it. That is, of course, very concerning.

Our office does work with families regularly trying to untangle these predatory schemes.

Folks who show up at the doorstep are looking for people who don't know what they're getting into. This particular company that came to my door does have a track record. They've been fined by the OEB. It doesn't take more than a Google search to see the litany of complaints that they leave in their wake. They and others are looking for vulnerable populations who don't understand their rights or obligations, their responsibilities as tenants, renters or homeowners. They really do prey on people who don't understand.

Speaker, I believe firmly that no business in Ontario should be allowed to build their bottom line preying on vulnerable people.

I know that we've had this conversation or a version of this conversation a number of times in this Legislature, about the door-to-door sales and what they can and can't sell. This is another area we're doing our best to keep up with. We've said that they can't sell certain products like natural gas or different things at the door, but now there's a whole new workaround, a whole new product line that they can sell. Again, it's that constant struggle of keeping up with nefarious opportunity.

1410

I have a couple more examples. We're always working with the legal clinic in our community to try to connect folks with services and help when they get into these tangles.

Here's another example: a couple who live in subsidized housing. They were sold a water filtration system. They were told, "Don't worry." They're both on ODSP, but they were told not to worry, that they would be fine. They were also given the 10-day cooling-off information, but when they tried to cancel, they couldn't get through to anyone to even ask how the water filter would be returned. Then they got a call from a collection agency threatening them, telling them that because they still had the water filtration unit, they were obligated to pay.

They were advised to send a registered letter to the collection agency telling them to stop contacting them and proceed to Small Claims Court for judgment—this was how the legal clinic had advised them—but then they were also left with a hole in their counter. This is just one tiny example of the rigmarole that ensues when someone gets into a contract that they may or may not understand and is predatory in nature.

Another case that the legal clinic put on our radar: A woman received bills from a lawn care company that had

sprayed her lawn, but she had not authorized it. She was told that because they had sprayed, she would have to pay, even though she didn't sign a contract for services, which is required for a bill of services or merchandise over \$50. Again, this is just one example of somebody taking advantage and trying to get money where they can.

I can't imagine how challenging it is to keep up with all of these, because even just in our office we hear about all of these creative, predatory folks that are out there. How on earth you keep up or keep ahead of them is always the challenge, but I believe that that's our responsibility. If we're strengthening protections for Ontario consumers, those are some great examples.

Here's another one. I got a letter on behalf of seniors. Someone wrote in that "it worries me how many senior citizens in our community and in the province receive ... letters requesting money from them...."

"I don't believe there is any legislation protecting seniors from predatory practices such as this.

"It is my desire to see legislation ... put in place to prevent 'companies or charities' to target senior citizens.

"I see every day in the news horror stories about senior citizens losing part of their life savings to scams, and the reason for this, in part, I believe, is because we legally allow predatory upsale/donation request practices from charities and other companies with no control...."

"I am not a senior, but I would hate something like this would happen to my senior family members, and by the time I learn of this, there is nothing that can be done to get them out of an onerous contract that they did not fully understand."

Speaker, I hope Grandma is not watching today, because I'm going to tell you a little story. She tells it very differently, but this is as a concerned family member. She was getting a lot of lottery mail and charity mail. Once you're on one mailing list as a vulnerable senior, they seem to circulate your address. She was right in the thick of all of these different scams, and was convinced that they were real and that this money was real, that she was standing to win money.

Oh my gosh, keeping up with the scams was unbelievable. I remember being on the phone one day with somebody who was calling her. I picked it up and talked to this scam artist, who said to me, "You might be her family, but I'm going to get the house." This man—I don't know where he lived and I don't know what he got out of it, but he had been calling her on a daily basis, asking about the garden, asking about her neighbours, asking about her granddaughter and asking about her life, inserting himself into her daily trust. He became almost like a friend, someone who calls every day and asks you how your day is going, just so that he could scam her and take her money.

They had cancelled her phone service, pretending to be her. They had tried to isolate her from her family, but we were able to advocate and we were able to help her to ensure that she wasn't further scammed. Here's another perfect example of a way that a vulnerable part of our community deserves protection.

Here we have this bill in front of us that we've been speaking about at length. We're supporting the bill, but we always need to be having the conversation about how best to protect consumers across the province in an ever-changing landscape of predatory opportunity.

Speaker, I said that I might be able to get to Tarion if I had time; I'm not going to. I know that that is part of the conversation we need to keep having, for goodness' sake. Four seconds left—I'll leave it for someone else to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I'd like to introduce two guests who are here in the Legislature today from my riding: Jackie Fraser and Jill Pollard. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure to make some comments on Bill 166, which is the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017. This bill would introduce rules to better protect consumers who are buying real estate, travel services, event tickets and even people buying brand new homes.

One of the major aspects of this bill deals with the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, which would enhance consumer protection to address conflict-of-interest scenarios, more commonly known as "double ending," where one real estate professional or brokerage is representing multiple parties. Heavier fines would be introduced for any code-of-ethics violations.

The second part of this bill deals with Tarion, the home warranty protection program. The rules surrounding Tarion have not been significantly updated since 1976. We asked Justice Cunningham to review Tarion, which was conducted in December 2016. Justice Cunningham concluded—a few of his recommendations are to provide for two brand new administrative authorities. One is for dispute resolution to make it easier for home owners if they discover a problem in the construction of their homes. This would also strengthen the regulation surrounding new home builders and vendors.

The third part of this bill has to do with the travel industry, basically making it fairer for people to access tickets for events.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to be able to rise and make a few comments on Bill 166. I guess I've got the right number here.

I see it affects five provincial acts, anything from Ontario new home warranties, real estate, the travel industry, ticket speculation and other amendments to other acts that would be necessary, if the bill passes. It's a long-overdue reform of home building and new home warranties in Ontario by splitting the role of the builder, regulator and warranty provider.

The bill does, though, fail to implement some of the most sweeping and meaningful reforms of Justice Cunningham's recommendations, which would allow new home warranties to follow a competitive market, as is the case in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. We are pleased to

see that the new authority will have Auditor General oversight and a mandatory internal ombudsman. The legislation, which abolishes Tarion, would implement a separate regulator and may not take place for a number of years.

We wanted to comment on the member from Oshawa about her family member receiving calls. I hear about that on a regular basis at my office as well. So if there is some form of reform and if we can stop these kinds of intrusions, whether it's family or constituents, even with no relation to us, I think we should do everything we can to do that because these individuals are vulnerable. They're often living alone and maybe don't have a lot of family close by. These people are some of the lowest of the low who take advantage of these people. I'd certainly like to see us do something that's even more drastic if I had the opportunity to do so. I think this is probably too easy on them. Anyway, we'll see where the rest of the debate goes.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Oshawa for her remarks and for sharing some of her personal experiences, things that she herself went through, things that her grandmother went through and things that she hears from her constituents on a daily basis about the need for stronger consumer protections. Certainly there is no shortage of issues that have been brought to MPP offices by people who have been scammed and who deserve some greater protection from their government.

Bill 166 is the Liberals' response to some of the concerns that have been raised in certain areas; specifically, new home warranties and Tarion, and also the ticket resale bots.

The overriding issue, or concern, that New Democrats have with this legislation is basically that it doesn't actually strengthen consumer protections in those key areas that it is designed to focus on. It's basically boilerplate regulatory language that is established that could really apply to any area of government jurisdiction. It doesn't get to the heart of the matter.

Also, enforcement will be very difficult. We know that these ticket bots are often out of country. If they're not based in Ontario, if they're not even based in Canada, it is really hard to imagine how the government is going to be able to prosecute violations of the law.

With Tarion there are still so many things to fix that this government is silent on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the remarks of the member from Oshawa and on Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017.

It's unfortunate that from time to time, and in my time here in the Legislature, it is not unusual that periodically it seems we need to come back to the Legislature with

further legislation dealing with consumer protection issues. As others have said in their comments, it just seems like there are people out there, when it seems like we've stuck a finger in the dike to plug one hole, who are always looking for a way to circumvent legislation and find other ways to take advantage of people. It's unfortunate, and I think it really speaks to the work that we do as individual MPPs. I think consumer protection probably represents a significant core of the constituency work that we all do as MPPs.

I can remember very clearly in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, probably the single biggest file that my office and staff have had to deal with over my 14-plus years has been the retail sale on the doorstep of energy contracts, where so many—not always, but often—seniors were caught in these long-term traps, I would call them, with undue pressure being put on people at the door, who may be alone, who may be frail, who feel intimidated, and who would sign a long-term contract. There's probably been nothing more than that one issue that we've had to deal with—many of them successfully over time—to try and help people get out of those.

This bill deals with real estate transactions, new home warranties, the travel industry and probably most significantly, Speaker, ticket speculation. It perhaps is the one that most people can deal with and feel somehow tangibly. I think most of us at one time or another have tried to go online and get a ticket to a Leafs game or to your favourite concert or whatever it may be and the tickets are no longer there; they are gone. Through this legislation, we're doing our best to try and address that, as well as a number of other things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Oshawa to reply.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues around the Legislature on my remarks on Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act.

One of the things, though, that I heard from the government member from Brampton West is about double-ending that I want to address, because I think it's something that has been frustrating in this conversation. I didn't have a chance to get into Tarion, but as I heard from the member from London West, there's a lot that we need to address when it comes to Tarion.

The government is characterizing that they're ending the practice of double-ending, but that isn't happening. In this particular piece of legislation, all that it does is enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to set out the cases when double-ending is prohibited, to say when it would be prohibited. But the default is for this practice to continue unless specifically prohibited. So it will just continue. But at least now they've laid out when it wouldn't be allowed. They're not disallowing it. So for them to say that, I don't think is fair.

The real estate agents have been advocating for transaction representation. The Real Estate Council of Ontario supports a ban. And this government is walking that line

that they always do: to make everybody not too unhappy but not accomplish anything. They can now say they've addressed it, but they haven't really dealt with it.

I think of the Liberals as buying shoes for people—if everybody needs new shoes, they say, “Well, let's buy everybody one shoe, and then we can say we bought everyone shoes.” It doesn't make anything better and nobody is happy, but they can say that they've addressed it. That's what I see here.

Even the Minister of Government and Consumer Services has said this new system won't likely be implemented until 2020, when it comes into force upon proclamation, not royal assent. It's—continue on?

I'm out of time. I won't continue on now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Premièrement, je dois déclarer : J'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

J'ai le plaisir de soutenir ce projet de loi 166, modifications proposées pour renforcer la protection des consommateurs en Ontario. Comme vous le savez, on trouve quatre mesures, programmes, initiatives ici. Par exemple, premièrement, le renouvellement du Régime de garanties des logements neufs de l'Ontario; deuxièmement, la Loi sur le courtage commercial et immobilier; troisièmement, la Loi sur le secteur du voyage; et quatrièmement, la Loi sur la vente de billets.

Si elle est adoptée, la loi, intitulée Loi sur le renforcement de la protection des consommateurs ontariens, permettra de donner aux amateurs des chances égales d'acheter des billets pour voir l'équipe, le concert ou le spectacle de leur choix. Parmi les modifications proposées, on dénote l'interdiction des logiciels d'achat automatisé de billets et la vente de billets qui ont été achetés à l'aide de ces logiciels.

Speaker, reference was made to bots. Bots, as you know, are automated scripts, automated programs. It's actually a very deep field. There are Web crawlers, Web spiders, robot software devices—all of these are, short form, known affectionately as bots. There are ticket bots, chat bots, Twitter bots, zombie bots. You'll be pleased to know that Siri on Apple and Cortana on Microsoft are themselves types of bots. Whether you're ordering food or shopping or saving money or banking or whatever, you're likely to be interacting. Of course, these have gained extreme attention because of not only the automated force with which they can flood the Internet—particularly, for example, Twitter. As you know, this is a major controversy going on right now in the United States and elsewhere, and likely perhaps even in Canada, with regard to the influence of election—for example, fake accounts flooding, automatically retweeting and automatically repopulating different Internet sites. Of course, one of those types of bots, ticket bots, is what we're trying to address here with regard to the automated sale and almost, you could say, theft of legitimate marketplace activity.

Aussi dans les modifications proposées, on dénote, par exemple, la limite du prix de revente des billets à 50 %

au-dessus de la valeur nominale; l'obligation pour les entreprises qui vendent des billets de spectacle de divulguer davantage de renseignements aux consommateurs; et la mise en place de nouvelles mesures d'application de la loi pour veiller à ce que les entreprises de vente et de revente de billets observent les règles en vigueur.

Ces modifications mettront les amateurs en premier en empêchant la hausse excessive du prix des billets sur le marché de la revente, en permettant aux amateurs d'obtenir davantage de renseignements dès le début et en prévenant la fraude dans la vente de billets de spectacle.

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Speaker, as has been mentioned, in our constituency office we often hear of individuals who have looked forward to some kind of cultural event, whether it's at a sporting or concert or other venue across this great province, and unfortunately a number of individuals, first of all, are late to the game, literally, because they are unable to outdo the automated software, the Twitter bots and the chat bots and the ticket bots. That leads to price gouging by the individuals who are eventually able to resell these.

That's one component among a number of others that some of my colleagues will be addressing, but as I say, Speaker, I think it's important that we get with the program here and quickly pass and move through committee and legislate Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017. I have just a few comments about the background, and then I've got about six specific things that I want to raise here if I have time.

Just by way of background: Government has an obligation to ensure that consumers have a fair and safe and, above all, an informed marketplace, because that's how good decisions are made. We want all Ontarians to be well protected and again, as I've said, well informed about choices they're making when they're purchasing things small or large. Whether that's booking a much-anticipated vacation or buying tickets to see a favourite band or buying and selling a house, we are committed to protecting those consumers. So we've created this legislation. Many members opposite and, indeed, from this side of the House have referred to the necessary reforms that the public is crying out for. This legislation, if passed, will strengthen those protections and address those cries for reform.

Very specifically, Bill 166, if passed, is going to introduce rules to better protect consumers buying travel services or event tickets, and buying or selling real estate, including newly built homes.

What I'd like to do now—and I've got about 10 minutes—is speak to a few very specific consumer protection rules that are included in Bill 166. I want to speak briefly

about the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, number one. I want to speak about the Real Estate Council of Ontario, which has enforcement obligations. I do want to speak about the new home warranty program, particularly about the role of Tarion. And if I have time, I want to say a few words about the travel industry and something about ticket speculation.

With regard to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, we are introducing new legislation that, as I say, if passed, will enhance protections, but particularly it's going to address this issue of conflict-of-interest scenarios that have been arising in multiple situations. We've been reading about it in the press. So a home purchaser is entitled to be represented by an agent who has their exclusive interests at the fore. When we have conflict-of-interest situations where parties to a transaction are in doubt as to who the agent offers the duty of care to and should be offering the best advice to, we want to clear that up.

The legislation is going to create very strong and very clear rules for cases where one real estate professional or one brokerage represents more than one party in a real estate trade. This is part of our other piece, the Fair Housing Plan, which was introduced in 2017. There will be substantial fines for code-of-ethics violations with respect to these conflict-of-interest rules.

We will consult, during the regulation development phase, on how those conflict-of-interest rules are going to be developed so that they are fair in terms of the obligations they place on the agent, and fair in the obligations and protections that consumers can expect.

I want to say something about the Real Estate Council of Ontario. That's the administrative authority that was established by the government, and it is responsible for enforcing the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. If the legislation is passed, RECO is expected to take on a very active role in informing both consumers and real estate professionals about the changes and impacts of this legislation. In addition, RECO will have an education role along with its enforcement role, enforcing the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the various regulations.

If the proposed legislation is approved, the maximum fines for a breach of the code of ethics are going to increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individual persons and brokers, and for a brokerage house, a brokerage company, \$100,000. So we are serious about seeing these protections implemented.

I want to say a couple of words now about something that we're all hearing about, and that's the new home warranty program renewal. Ontario has introduced legislation that, again, if passed, will strengthen the confidence that Ontario's new home warranties and protections create in the province. Strengthening the confidence of consumers is in many ways what this legislation is about. We strengthen the consumers' confidence by having effective protections and rules around these various issues that we're talking about today.

Particularly with respect to the new home warranty program, the proposed changes—again, if passed—

would do a couple of things. They would provide two administrative authorities: One will administer the new home warranty program and one will regulate new home builders and vendors. So there's the program implementation and then there's the regulation of new home builders and vendors. It will also make the dispute resolution process easier for homeowners if there is a problem in the construction of the home. We do not want consumers to be tied up in unnecessary legal tangles and other tangles if there is a consumer issue to be dealt with.

We are going to strengthen the regulation of new home builders and vendors, because the vendors and the builders are the ones that are supplying the product, and when there are issues around warranties and so on, it's inevitably with the products. So a better product and a better oversight of product construction should go a long way to alleviating the necessity for having a heavy hammer on the regulation side.

Government is going to take over some of the responsibility in making these rules and setting the standards, but again, we are going to do that with counsel, in consultation with our partners.

I was going to say a few words particularly about Tarion, because that's a necessary component of this, but perhaps if later in the afternoon I have the chance to speak again, I will. Suffice it to say that this legislation has consumers first and foremost.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to stand and provide comment. I think it's always important when we're doing things like this that there is always a balance in the system. Obviously, consumer protection is very critical and we want to make sure that we understand what the legislation is going to do and truly make sure there is protection rather than just more administration, because if there is one thing we found with this government it's that they like to do lots of red-tape regulation. They want to prohibit a lot of things. They want to hide behind—they are protecting, but at the end of the day, are they truly?

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It makes you wonder at times. With all of the challenges with their hydro file, they went out and borrowed \$25 billion, which some are estimating is going to cost us \$93 billion. You would have wondered, Mr. Speaker, if we had had some consumer protection there, if we would have gotten into that dilemma, particularly for those young pages sitting in front of you. They're going to need some protection from a lot of this type of thing.

We certainly support when there are valid issues brought to the table. We would hope that on a bill like this, again, they will listen to all three parties and have the ability to have input into these types of bills, so that we come out with something that's going to strengthen the legislation, not make it onerous and not just add more and more layers and hide behind spin, because that's what they did again.

In my question this morning, I talked about the Green Energy Act: Again, that's going to cost the taxpayer \$133

billion for a very small piece of our energy sector and the supply of our power. If we had had some consumer protection there, Mr. Speaker—one of my colleagues, from Dufferin—Caledon, I believe, talked this morning about some of the advertising they're doing. Where is the consumer protection there? The Auditor General came out and said this would not have made the cut if she still had the ability, which the Liberal government stripped from her, to say that this is a partisan ad as opposed to a legitimate ad.

When we talk about consumer protection, I would have liked to have seen something like that put in there. Then you would know that they're actually sincere and they're going to stand up for the people of Ontario, as opposed to just bringing in legislation that they can utilize to their advantage.

I'm always supportive of consumer protection, but let's do it in balance, so that it's definitely a benefit to the consumer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise to offer some thoughts on the comments that were made by the government members about Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act.

Speaker, I think it is great that this government is taking some action to protect consumers. Unfortunately, the action that they are taking will do very little to deal with the problems that they themselves have identified, have recognized, with new home warranties and with scalper bots, just to name two of the areas that are addressed in this bill.

One of our main concerns about the changes that have been proposed to Tarion in this omnibus bill is that the changes only come into force upon proclamation of the act, not royal assent. Of course, that means that the status quo—all of the problems that we have seen in Tarion for decades—will remain in effect. The minister responsible herself admitted that the new system will most likely not be implemented until 2020. So we are still some years away from fixing those problems that were highlighted so effectively by my colleague the former member for Trinity-Spadina, Rosario Marchese, when he brought in his private member's bill on Tarion, and also my other colleague the former member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Jagmeet Singh, when he brought in his private member's bill.

Speaker, the Liberal government has had 14 years to deal with these issues. It's too bad that when they finally do something about it, it's not going to have any kind of policy effectiveness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure to rise to continue to give my comments on Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act.

I ended my previous remarks speaking about ticket speculation. Fundamentally, I think the practice of scalping is extremely unfair, especially, as the member

from Oshawa mentioned, for people living in rural areas and northern Ontario who may not have access to modern technology. But even having access to modern technology doesn't mean that you will not be a victim of scalpers.

I think most of us know that scalping is the practice where major event tickets go online to be purchased, but often we hear that the entire venue, the entire show, the entire game is sold out within mere seconds. We consulted with over 34,000 Ontarians about how we can shelter Ontarians from unfair gouging. We got a lot of responses from industry representatives and other stakeholders. I'm very hopeful that with the passage of this legislation we'll be able to enhance the possibility of people who want to attend their favourite events to attend them while they won't be gouged.

Thank you very much. I look forward to continued debate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. The member for Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: There are many facets to protecting our consumers in this province of ours. I think one of the things that might be added to the comments today is that consumers certainly need to have the right guidelines to protect themselves, and the government has to get involved, when they set up a government agency—no matter whether it's arm's-length or not—so that these agencies have it in their bylaws or rules that that's what they are for. This bill does address some of those concerns.

I know that in my time here I've dealt with some of these agencies—certainly with Tarion at one point. And the complaints kept coming across my desk as to the ways that agency conducted itself, although I think they were probably working within the rules that they had set before them.

Whenever any government bill comes before us, or when a government proposes a bill to put before us, I think these things ought to be spelled out first. They should see what the reaction to the bill is before it's even introduced, or at least talk to stakeholders, to make sure that they try to get these bills right.

I do understand the committee procedure that we have with these bills, but I think a lot of the homework can go into some of these bills before they get through the House. I look to different bills we've had in the past; the Green Energy Act comes to mind. It wasn't well thought out and now we're paying for that. I understand that the figures we're talking about are a 300% increase in hydro bills, due to some of this government's recklessness with our energy system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation can now reply.

Hon. David Zimmer: So I have another two minutes, and as I said earlier in my remarks, I did want to touch on Tarion, because that's an issue that's receiving a lot of attention.

As you know, Tarion administers the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. They have exclusive responsibility for administering the home warranties plan, but we do want to bring some changes there.

If the legislation is passed, during the transition to the two-entity regime Tarion would continue to perform its current role, but—and this is the important piece here—under a much-strengthened oversight framework that is going to include a couple of issues.

There will be a greater government role in respect of rule-making through minister approval of certain Tarion bylaws that are deemed to be regulations. So we are putting ministerial oversight directly into the Tarion process. This will authorize the minister to appoint an administrator if it is felt that there are serious concerns arising regarding Tarion's performance during the transition period, and to ensure that certain conditions are satisfied.

This is important because Ontario's consumers look to Tarion for these ultimate protections. It's the backup. It's the safety valve. Because of its importance, the legislation, if passed, will ensure that there is a direct ministerial oversight of issues that may arise at Tarion that require redress.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to debate this afternoon on this legislation which is intended to protect consumers, we're told. That's right in the title. Let me get the full title—no, this is schedule 2: Protection for Owners and Purchasers of New Homes Act, 2017. There are four schedules to the legislation. I do want to focus exclusively on schedule 2, and the lack of protection offered by schedule 2 for owners of new homes and warranties.

I'm going to first start off, Speaker—we know that this was all motivated by Justice Cunningham's report. He spent a good deal of time talking and discussing and examining the various problems that Tarion and Ontario's new home warranty program had created for so many consumers in this province. He had a mandate from this government to investigate Tarion, investigate the new home warranty program and come up with recommendations. He came up with 37 recommendations—37 recommendations. After examining the problem in detail, all the recommendations hinged on one fundamental aspect—and I just want to read briefly from Justice Cunningham's report:

"I do not believe that this problem and the challenges I have identified can be adequately addressed in the current model without significant and structural changes to the new home warranty sector in Ontario." And then he goes on: "The proposed framework—a mandatory new home warranty program delivered through a competitive multi-provider warranty system, with a separate builder/vendor regulator, independent adjudication of warranty disputes, and rule-making subject to government approval."

This bill fails to act on those recommendations of a “competitive multi-provider warranty system” and “independent adjudication of warranty disputes.” The very fundamental proposal that Justice Cunningham put forth was rejected. Now, the government never said they rejected it; they just didn’t act upon it.

If we want to see how this played out, after Justice Cunningham’s report, the ministry of consumer protection created a new home warranty program renewal stakeholder consultation group. This group met through the summer to advise the government on legislation for Tarion. I’m reading straight from the ministry’s summary of those discussions, on page 2: “Over the course of six sessions, the working group provided feedback” on the following topics. Feedback, however, was not asked for on the following subjects: a multi-provider warranty delivery model—the very essence of Justice Cunningham’s recommendation was prohibited from being discussed by this government through the stakeholder consultation group—homeowner appeals of warranty authority decisions to a third-party builder or vendor; and appeals of licensing and related decisions. The independent adjudication? Prohibited from speaking about it. The two essential components of consumer protection and of Justice Cunningham’s report—this government prohibited their own stakeholder consultation group from discussing it. Not just bringing forth proposals; they were prohibited from discussing it.

Speaker, if you go to the very last page of the ministry’s summary of this consultation group, you’ll see 10 people identified as members of that stakeholder group. Five of them are employed by Tarion—five of them. Five of the 10 are Tarion talking heads. This is supposedly an independent stakeholder consultation group, and they went and stacked the deck against consumers in this province. They handcuffed the group and said, “You’re not going to speak about a competitive, multiservice provider. You’re not going to speak about independent adjudication of warranty disputes, and then we’re going to stack the deck with Tarion employees and contractors to make sure that consumers won’t get the protection they think they were going get with this bill.”

Speaker, I find it troubling. Here it is: In June 2017, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services established a working group to provide service and to provide advice and input on proposals for the legislative changes that would be required to implement the government’s plan. That’s key: not to implement Justice Cunningham’s recommendations but to implement the government’s plan. I ask you, Speaker: Is that an honest way to do things? Is that a sincere and genuine way to do things, to take Justice Cunningham’s recommendations, tell everybody that they’re going to bring forth legislation, create a working group to provide advice to the government, but then stack the deck and handcuff that group so that they cannot even speak about Justice Cunningham’s recommendations?

I think that anybody who looks at the evidence and examines this will come to the same conclusion that I

came to. This was not a sincere attempt to address the problems of Tarion. It was not a genuine attempt to improve consumer protection. It was anything but genuine or sincere. It was to create a façade, to create an appearance while actually doing the opposite.

I guess we ought not to be surprised. This is not the first time in my 10 years here that I have seen this sort of devious behaviour, this skirting around and using vocabulary to make it appear that one thing is happening when another is not.

There are some marginal improvements, but without adopting and accepting the proposed framework, they really ring hollow and empty. I guess the most significant element of this is that now the warranty provider falls under oversight of the Auditor General’s office. That’s a good thing. However, the Auditor General focuses on the financial dealings and not the operational aspects of a subordinate body of the Legislature.

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On the financial side, there can be and will be some scrutiny over this new delegated administrative authority, but only on the financial side. On the operations side, this Legislature will have no teeth. We’ll have no oversight; we’ll have no scrutiny over the new home warranty program.

This could have been adopted by having Ontario’s Ombudsman providing consumers with a relief valve, or a remedy, when or if a problem arises, but, no, Speaker, they rejected that completely.

They also have stuck with the licensing appeals tribunal as the adjudicative model for new home warranty disputes, and this is astonishing. Justice Cunningham said we needed to have independent arbitration, and persons who are knowledgeable of the subject to be the adjudicators.

Just for those who aren’t aware of this, the licence appeals tribunal does everything from parole board hearings to animal welfare cases to driver’s licence suspensions. They do a mixed bag of things, and, I think we can all say, with mixed results as well. The licence appeals tribunal has not demonstrated efficiencies or effectiveness in their tribunal system. That, indeed, has been one of the long-standing faults, and the place of origin of complaints by consumers is the licence appeals tribunal.

Again, this government, and this minister—because I know; I’ve spoken to people on that stakeholder consultation group. We had one consumer protection advocate out of the 10. With 10 people in that group, only one was a consumer protection advocate.

Speaker, to purposely construct this group and stack the deck and prevent it from discussing the fundamental recommendations is obscene. That is not what we should ever accept in a representative democracy, or in any sort of democracy.

It was interesting. I have to say this: Going through schedule 2, they did make one change that I think is important, and I think it illustrates this government’s view of legislation and this government’s view of public policy.

If you go to page 50, section 47(1)(b) in the act, you'll notice that there was a change. Let me just read it—yes, 47(1)(b). In the present act—and this is about warranties—47(1)(b) right now says “constructed in a workmanlike manner and is free from defects in material.” That's a reasonable approach; that's one of the criteria under the Warranties section.

We all know what “workmanlike manner” and “free from defects” mean. But this government changed 47(1)(b). It now says: “constructed in a skilful manner” instead of “a workmanlike manner.” We know why. Maybe I should put this out: Do we know why we changed the term “workmanlike” to “skilful”?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Gender.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Gender. The member from—I forget your riding—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: London West.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —London West hit the nail on the head in a skilful manner. We replaced “workmanlike manner,” which is a recognized legal term that illustrates a concept, with “skilful manner.” Now, I don't know; I could say that this government has introduced this legislation in a skilful manner. They have skillfully made it appear that they're doing something when they're not. I wouldn't say that they introduced this legislation or composed this legislation in a thoughtful or workmanlike manner, but it has been a skilful manner.

That's just one illustration of where their priorities are with this piece of legislation, Speaker. I find it astonishing. If I was Justice Cunningham, I would be disturbed and I would say I would never, ever take on another commission from this government, when they are going to take somebody's hard work, their sincere and genuine examination and analysis of a problem, and then have it torqued and skewed and twisted to achieve some other end. I'm not sure what that other end is. We all know the term “CYA.” That would be unparliamentary, to expand upon the “CYA,” but it certainly appears to be covering their buttocks with this legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's not parliamentary. Please withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Speaker, it is important that we get this right. It's important that consumers are receiving the very elements that they're expecting. They're expecting protection. They're expecting improvements to Ontario's new home warranty program, but we're not going to get it. We're not going to get it. Justice Cunningham's report has been cherry-picked so that there is no effectiveness. I would say that we've just wasted nearly \$1 million on Justice Cunningham's report. Now, I know \$1 million is not much to this government, but to most people in this province, \$1 million is a substantial amount of money. When \$1 million is spent on behalf of taxpayers, of their money, we expect to have some value in return. We got the value; we got the report. But we don't receive any value if that million-dollar report is torqued and skewed and tossed away.

I would like to hear from any member on the government side as to why the minister prohibited the working

group from speaking about the competitive model, why the minister prohibited the working group from speaking about independent adjudication. I'd like to hear an answer to those questions. I'd like to hear why is it that the government felt it necessary to stack the deck of the working group and put on a majority of Tarion contractors and employees to get what they wanted to get. I want to hear answers to those questions. I know the people at Canadians for Properly Built Homes want to hear answers for this. We know the Ferlands want to hear answers on this. We know that there are hundreds and hundreds of people who have felt disenfranchised and have felt that they have been dealt unfairly with by Tarion over the years. They want to have answers as well. Why did this government throw all those people out the door, under the bus—whatever metaphor you want to use? Why did they feel that it was necessary to deal these same people another hand of injustice?

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise to offer some thoughts on the comments from the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington about Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. Speaker, while New Democrats do not share that member's enthusiasm for a competitive, for-profit model, we do have some of the same concerns he pointed to in his speech, and that is, the Liberal government's disregard for the recommendations that were brought forward by Justice Cunningham on how to reform Tarion and how to ensure Tarion actually protected Ontario consumers. Instead of listening to Justice Cunningham, instead of looking at other models—for example, a true public agency model—that might better serve Ontario consumers, this government, through Bill 166, has gone with a single-provider, delegated-authority model, which was not what Justice Cunningham had recommended.

Our concern, as we have stated throughout this debate, remains the ineffectiveness of Bill 166 to actually address the problems that people are experiencing with their new homes. When they go to access the protections that should be in place through the Ontario New Home Warranty Program, they have found that they are out of luck because the system is not designed to actually protect consumers. I want to acknowledge the work of Karen Somerville from Canadians for Properly Built Homes to advocate on this issue, to bring these very real problems, these catastrophes that are faced by people in this province and the lack of any meaningful protection from Tarion, which, unfortunately, Bill 166 will not address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm really happy to have an opportunity to speak to this. This proposed legislation as it relates to Tarion is in fact based on the recommendations from the Honourable John Douglas Cunningham and on public and stakeholder feedback. Speaker, at one

time in my life I worked in the home-building business. I know how huge a decision it is to build a home. The cost, of course, is enormous for families. But it's not just the cost; it's all of the hopes and dreams that go into the construction of a new home where a family will live and be together. So it's really important that when people do make that big investment, they have confidence in their builder and that if things do not go as they should, to know that there is recourse for them.

So, Speaker, I think this is important legislation. It's good legislation. It's based on extensive research and feedback. One of the things I am happiest about in this legislation is the dispute resolution process. That process has to be easier to protect consumers better. That's exactly what it is doing. When a homeowner who might not have any background in construction discovers that something in their new home is not up to snuff, they need to be able to have the confidence that there is a process—a strong, solid process—where they can get the remedies that they deserve.

This legislation also strengthens the regulation of new home builders and vendors, and, again, that's important. The biggest decision, by far, that most people ever make is the purchase of a new home, and we as government want to be there to protect those consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and provide comment to my colleague Mr. Hillier from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. I always have a challenge getting that one out. He, of course, is very knowledgeable. He comes from the building industry. I think he did, as he always does, a very thorough review of this.

I think a couple of key points that he talked about were that Justice Cunningham issued 37 recommendations regarding new home warranties, but actually, this bill implements a small fraction of them. The bill does not clarify whether appeals of warranty decisions will continue to rely on competing expert evidence—consumer's expert versus warranty provider's expert—rather than having an independent adjudicator hire an impartial expert to examine the facts per Justice Cunningham's recommendation. I think what can't be overlooked, as I said earlier in my comments, is that certainly you want consumer protection, you want balance.

I built a new home a few years ago. What I want to see is that if there's an unscrupulous builder, let's go over and make sure that person is penalized. Let's not whitewash with overregulation like this government tends to do, put in more red tape, more regulation, so that everybody in the industry suffers. It's not providing much protection for the consumer. What it's really doing is burdening those and letting the ones that actually are the ones creating the challenges for consumers off the hook.

He talked a little bit about a key stakeholder being prohibited from consulting on the bill. Again, this whole transparency thing keeps coming back over and over. We heard again last week with the Auditor General very

much a transparency concern. This morning, my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon raised the issue of advertising. Where's the consumer protection there, where they're actually utilizing taxpayer money to do partisan Liberal ads leading up to an election? Where is the consumer protection in that case?

I think in regard to certainly the real estate industry, there are some changes being made. I think what we want to make sure there is, again, to go after people. If they are breaching the professional code of ethics, then increase those fines and go after those that break the law. Let's not try to whitewash. Obviously it has to be consumer protection that is paramount, but let's do it in a balanced manner.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'aimerais remercier le membre de Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox et Addington pour ses commentaires. Il a bien expliqué ses critiques envers le projet de loi. Le projet de loi sert à changer Tarion. En ce moment, c'est le système d'assurance, pour les gens qui ont des nouvelles maisons, qui a laissé tomber tellement de nouveaux propriétaires.

Acheter une maison, ça devrait être un temps de joie dans une famille. Mais lorsque tu achètes une nouvelle maison et que tu te retrouves avec des problèmes, tu dis : « Oh! bien, il n'y a pas de problème. On a une bonne assurance. » Mais non. Le programme d'assurance, bien qu'il ait été payé, qu'il existe, a laissé tomber tellement de personnes.

Je peux vous donner des exemples qui sont arrivés dans Nickel Belt, dont une nouvelle maison. Sur les plans, c'est clair qu'il doit y avoir un balcon. La nouvelle maison est faite, etcetera, et il n'y a pas de balcon. Bon, ils ont été facturés pour ce balcon-là; ils ne l'ont jamais eu.

Un autre, c'était la plomberie. Ils arrivent dans leur nouvelle maison. Tout est beau. Tout sent neuf—les couleurs, tout ça. La première fois qu'ils vont pour utiliser le lavabo dans la salle de bain, le lavabo n'est connecté à rien du tout. L'eau coule, mais elle coule par terre, dans la vanité. C'était une salle de bain au deuxième étage, donc l'eau a fait beaucoup de dommage lorsque ça tombait sur le plafond de l'étage en dessous. Tout ça parce que la plomberie avait été mal faite.

Tu penserais, dans une maison neuve avec une garantie, que ça deviendrait évident que c'est quelque chose qui doit être couvert par la garantie, mais vous ne pouvez pas vous imaginer le cauchemar que ça a été.

On a besoin de changer les choses. Le projet de loi ouvre la porte aux changements, mais ne les fait pas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington to reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a pleasure to listen to the other members engage in comments on my debate. I do want to point out the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development's comments. She stated in her comments that this bill was predicated and based on Justice Cunningham's recommendations.

That is untrue, Speaker. This bill is based upon a rejection of Justice Cunningham's recommendations. That is the fact. That is the fact that I presented during my debate, that the competitive, multi-service provider was rejected, that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prohibited the working group from even discussing it, along with the independent adjudication recommendation.

1520

The very essence of Justice Cunningham's report, all his recommendations about transparency, about openness, about operational efficiencies—everything in his report, all those recommendations were based on those keystones of a competitive multi-service provider. This government rejected the complete premise of Justice Cunningham's recommendation.

Speaker, if they're going to do that, that's within their prerogative to do so, but they have an obligation to explain why. The questions I posed during my debate remain unanswered by this government, and they must be answered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I wish to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CUTTING UNNECESSARY

RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES INUTILES

Mr. Duguid moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / *Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to be sharing my time with my very capable parliamentary assistant the member for Davenport, who has spent a lot of her time on this bill, sitting with a number of colleagues on all three sides of the House through the committee process, hearing from others, putting forward amendments and listening very closely to what we heard from people who did come in and provide their views on this very important piece of legislation.

When I say "very important piece of legislation," Mr. Speaker, I'm not suggesting that this bill is going to

completely eliminate all the unnecessary regulatory burden that exists out there. I'm not saying that it is the only thing that the government is doing—far from it. But it's an important vehicle that our government has put into place to help reduce regulatory burden on a regular basis. Our intent is to move forward with this kind of legislation on at least an annual basis. This is the second such bill that we've moved forward on, as members of the Legislature will know.

What this bill does is it cuts unnecessary red tape to ensure that in this province our businesses, in particular our small businesses, are not burdened by unnecessary regulations. I use the word "unnecessary" deliberately, Mr. Speaker, because this government is not, nor would I expect any government would ever be, in the business of cutting regulations that were necessary.

I think what we're looking at here and in this bill, certainly, and I think the evidence is certainly there and was heard at committee—we're talking about regulations that have no public good, that do not serve any particular public interest. Indeed, as our world changes, we're talking about opportunities to modernize regulations to free up our businesses so they can focus on those things that matter, the health and safety regulations, regulations in the workplace to protect workers, consumer protection regulations, environmental regulations, just to name a few.

I don't think anybody in the House—and I know my friends on the PC side sometimes get painted into a corner where people think they're against all regulations. Well, that's nonsense. I know that they're not against all regulations. When they were in government, they passed probably as many regulations as we have passed in our time in government, because regulations aren't all bad. Many regulations are very necessary. They are there to protect our society. They are there to protect our people—in particular, regulations to do with health, the environment, consumer protection—to protect workers and other areas that are of important public interest. But there are regulations out there and processes out there that aren't necessary, that are overly cumbersome and that need to be tackled. Sometimes they're pretty minor. If you look at some of the provisions in this bill, some of them are fairly obscure. They have an impact, but on a particular sector of our economy or a particular set of businesses or a particular set of people in our communities.

It's difficult to come forward with an amendment to legislation or an amendment to a regulation every time you come up with these issues. So putting it into a bill like we have before us here today and providing a window for all legislators, on all sides of the House, and for all businesses across the province to know that every year, this government, no matter who is in power, is going to have a vehicle to help make things a little easier in this province when it comes to eliminating unnecessary burden and regulations—to make this province the easiest place in which to do business, which is something I often say when I'm out on the speaking circuit or

speaking in this Legislature. We all ought to be making this province the easiest place in the world in which to do business. That doesn't mean we're going easy on anybody in terms of their obligations that serve the public good. What it means is that we're ensuring that this is a competitive place to do business, that this is a place that doesn't put unnecessary regulatory burden on our businesses or put our businesses through processes that are way too time-consuming.

Many small businesses in this province just don't have the time to comply with even the regulations that exist today. That's why we need to—all of us need to—pay attention. We heard the voice of those small businesses. It's not by accident that we've won Golden Scissors Awards and many times been one of the leading jurisdictions in Canada and North America when it comes to reducing regulatory burden. It's because we've heard the voice of small businesses across this province when they say, "Help us do a better job of creating jobs in this economy and growing this economy by eliminating those unnecessary regulatory burdens that you come across."

Now, it sounds easy—and often, when you talk to businesses, many businesses will complain, no matter where you are on the continent, no matter what level of government you represent, about regulations. That's not unusual. It actually happens quite frequently. Where I think it really matters is when you ask the business, "What, specifically, are we doing as a government that (1) you think is unnecessary and (2) is really getting in your way of being competitive or focusing on those things that really matter—the health issues, the safety issues, the workplace worker protection issues, the consumer protection issues?" That's when we cut to the chase and we get businesses to really consider what matters to them. That's what this legislation is all about.

I want to thank the different ministers and their staff and ministries and their respective staff right across the government who have been involved in this initiative—because it's not the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth that generally drives these things. We encourage other ministries in the government to come forward with ideas, but the ideas have to come through those ministries and their stakeholders. So I want to thank the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. All of those ministries have been a part of the work that's in front of the Legislature for third reading here today.

1530

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our Open for Business team. This is a group of, I would say, almost missionaries within the government who look at government as a vehicle for the public good, but also look at their role as being a spokesperson and a voice for small businesses in particular but all businesses in our province when it comes to ferreting out those unnecessary regulatory burdens that do indeed impact our com-

petitiveness as a jurisdiction. This group is passionate about what they do. They're creative in what they bring forward.

I'd love to take credit for all of the initiatives we've brought forward over the last 10 years or so. I was the founder of the Open for Business program initially way back in my first portfolio as Minister of Labour. So it's something I've been involved in from day one. But many of these good ideas come from two places. One is our stakeholders themselves. That's where a lot of the best ideas come from: our business community, our small businesses, our charities, our non-profit businesses. We've done a lot of work with them as well in reducing the regulatory burden for them.

Other good ideas comes from our ministries, but a lot of the good ideas, when it comes to looking around the world and saying, "Yes, we're known today in Ontario as a global best practice in reducing regulatory burden and we can be very proud of it"—yes, we have jurisdictions coming here from all over the world, looking at what we've done as we've eliminated 80,000 regulatory burdens. I'm going to repeat that: We have eliminated 80,000 regulatory burdens over the years. That's something we can all be very proud of. At the same time, our work is hardly done. While we're seen as a global best practice in reducing unnecessary regulatory burden, the fact of the matter is, there are still other jurisdictions doing other creative things that we can learn from. That's what the Open for Business team does: They look globally, they search globally, to make sure that not only are we leading the world today in reducing regulatory burden; we're looking at other jurisdictions to see what they are doing and we learn from what they're doing and, where necessary, bring in good ideas here.

That's where I reach across the floor to my opposition colleagues to say: Look, there's no monopoly on good ideas when it comes to reducing regulatory burden. We're open to suggestions. We're open to ideas. This type of bill is open to them as well. When they talk to our collective stakeholders and come up with ideas that can help make this province more competitive by reducing unnecessary regulatory burden, we're going to listen because this is not a political bill. Let's face it; nobody is going to be knocking on doors next spring and have people bring up the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017. It's not something that gets any of us re-elected. It's not something that's going to make a difference in any of our electoral fortunes. It's a pretty non-partisan bill overall.

I welcome the input of the opposition in this process. This bill is going through third reading, so the amendments are done now at committee. It's coming through for its final debate in the House. If passed, it will make a difference in the lives of some of our businesses. It will make a difference in this province. It will save tens of millions of dollars—I think it's in the neighbourhood of \$22 million for businesses. That's a good amount of money. It's not a game-changer by any means, but it's a good amount of money and it's going to save hundreds of

hours of time for our businesses as well and our business leaders, which is something that's really important for small businesses as well.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with all sides of the House as we go through this debate and continuing to advance our efforts to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden. It didn't start, as I said, with this bill; it started many years ago when we conducted what we called round tables with business sectors. We did one sector at a time. I think we got up to about 13 different sectors. This was seen as a global best practice at the time. We said, "Give us five good things that we can do. We'll agree to them. We'll sit down and figure out how to implement them, and we'll guarantee you that we will get them done in six months." We did that for 13 different sectors, and that helped eliminate hundreds of thousands of costs to businesses, which was helpful and was able to help us work with sectors. It gave those sectors a feeling that they had a voice here at Queen's Park, that their concerns about unnecessary regulatory burden, which had fallen on deaf ears for years—not because people didn't care, but because there wasn't a good vehicle to be able to move them forward and make those regulatory changes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we basked in that for a while, and we moved very much on our way to reducing 80,000 regulatory burdens in this province. We recognized that a lot of the folks who we were talking to through those years were association heads, CEOs of businesses, sometimes labour leaders, but they were all leaders, representatives of others. The people we weren't really getting through to, and not having a conversation with about reducing regulatory burden, were sometimes our front-line workers, and who knows better about regulatory burdens and about the paperwork that governments put businesses through—sometimes necessary, sometimes not so much—than the folks who are filling out those forms every day, the front-line workers?

That's why we looked for another vehicle, to try to go beyond the representatives, the CEOs and the labour leaders to the very front-line folks themselves. That's where the Red Tape Challenge came about. The Red Tape Challenge, Mr. Speaker, has been a very significant success. I'll share with the members some of the success that we've seen on that challenge. It's an online platform, so businesses, business leaders, front-line workers or everyday Ontarians who have an interest in that particular sector, or retired workers from the sector who are still interested in that sector, can have input into government, into giving us ideas.

We took it on sector by sector. We started with the auto parts sector. I think we've done some with the agriculture sector. We've done, I think, financial services. We've got about five sectors that we're well into now. There are a couple of sectors that are reporting very soon. And in every instance we've had hundreds, if not thousands, of people participating. It has really been a help.

When you think about it and you think about the money that we have been able to save our businesses

through the Red Tape Challenge alone, it's actually quite significant. Of the five consultations that have been held, 65,000 website views have taken place. I said "hundreds"; it's 1,400 comments collected on ways to improve our regulatory environment.

To date, the challenge has identified 171 opportunities that the government will act on to reduce burdens for businesses. There were other ideas that we brought forward where we looked and said either, "It's something that's necessary. We need to have it in place," or "It's something that we're not able to work with right now." But 171 improvements are well on their way to being made by this process already, so I think it's a resounding success. It's new. We're going to keep working on it. We're going to keep refining it as we go, but it's a great way to get participation from people across the province and from front-line workers.

That brings us to the bill before us today, the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, 2017. This bill, if enacted, would implement five new initiatives to reduce burden on Ontario businesses. The first, and one of the more interesting initiatives, is to reduce regulatory costs by requiring all ministries to offset every dollar of every new administrative cost to businesses by removing \$1.25 of old, unnecessary costs. I'm going to get back to that in a little while, Mr. Speaker, because I want to talk a little bit more about what this will do, how important it is and how helpful it is, and to ease any fearmongering that may be out there on this particular provision.

Another provision is streamlining compliance for small businesses. Small businesses are different than larger businesses; there's no question. Small businesses don't always have the capacity to do what governments ask them to do, so ensuring that undue burdens aren't placed on small businesses right up front when new or amended regulations are introduced, ensuring that small businesses are treated with that knowledge, is really important. That's a signal that will come out of this bill to small businesses across this province.

The third area is international or national standards alignment. It sounds boring, but it's really important, Mr. Speaker.

1540

We were fortunate, in Ontario, and I was fortunate, as Minister of Economic Development for the province, to lead the national dialogue, to lead the national negotiation that led to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, the most ambitious free trade agreement that this country has ever agreed to. This is an internal free trade agreement. It reduces costs of doing business across the country. The shining piece to that agreement, the biggest achievement in that agreement is, we were the first jurisdiction anywhere in the world to put in place a mechanism that helps us nationally harmonize or mutually recognize standards and regulations across Canada. That mechanism is still in the process of being set up. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement is fresh and new, and it should be set up, I think, within the coming year. It finally provides a vehicle for businesses and governments across Canada

to harmonize and standardize some of the regulations that drive businesses crazy. When they have 13 or 14 different regulatory regimes to work through to be able to do business across the country, it puts them at a horrible competitive disadvantage compared to other jurisdictions that may not have that kind of a challenge nationally. We're finally tackling that, and I'm so proud to say that Ontario has led the way in that national initiative.

But it's not just about Canada—because the bulk of our trade here in Ontario is south of the border; it's also about harmonizing our standards and regulations with jurisdictions to the south, whether it be the work that we're doing on a memorandum of understanding with Michigan—which our Premier has so gracefully led in her close work with Governor Snyder in Michigan, mostly on the auto sector file, which is so important to our economy—or the work that we've done in reaching out to Ohio and Governor Kasich, and the opportunities that we have to work together to harmonize regulations and make it easier for cross-border business to take place. That's an area that's of great importance.

So when we're passing new regulations, we can have made-in-Ontario solutions if we deem that to be in the public interest, if it's really important to do so, but we also ought to consider the importance of, whenever possible, harmonizing and standardizing those regulations with our sister jurisdictions to make sure that we're not putting an unnecessary burden on businesses and that we're keeping Ontario a competitive place to do business.

The fourth area is rewarding good actors. Instead of focusing our time, when it comes to compliance, on the good guys, on those that have really good records when it comes to compliance and never have complaints about them, we should focus on the bad actors. That's just a simple method of good compliance technique in today's society. It's not a new idea. The Ministry of Labour has done it for a number of years now, with very good success. It's focusing on the bad actors and spending less time burdening those that are complying already, those with really good track records. It's ensuring that you're getting the maximum value out of your compliance efforts.

The fifth area is one that's also equally important: an electronic transmission guarantee. In this day and age, all governments ought to be able to provide businesses with the opportunity to do their work with governments online. I almost find it unfathomable that governments today still don't have that capability. In fact, we're committing to ensure that this government can deliver for our small businesses in providing small businesses with the option—they don't have to; they can still do the paper work offline. But the required documentation for their compliance initiatives and applications can be done online, which will save businesses countless hours, time and money.

I want to go back to the \$1-for-\$1.25 regulatory administration cost initiative. That was an initiative that—I think there was some time spent at committee in the

discussions. That's what committee is for, after all: to have discussions about these kinds of things. Some stakeholders brought some concerns about that piece of the legislation. We listened very carefully to those stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you that I respect the views of the stakeholders that brought forward their initiatives, but I truly believe that their concerns were entirely off base. At the end of the day, we moved an amendment anyway. The amendment probably wasn't needed, but we moved it to provide a level of comfort to those who had raised some of those concerns, because I think the concern was that somehow or another—there were two concerns. One is that ministries that had to offset the \$1.25 for every dollar that they imposed on businesses would somehow or another go straight to a regulation that was going to endanger people's lives. I don't know what government of any party or what bureaucrat in our government would ever do that. What would be the incentive for anyone to ever do that? And what cabinet is ever going to let them do that? There are checks and balances through our whole system. Why would we ever consider doing that? So I think that it was off base, the suggestion that that would happen. The fact of the matter is that ministries have two years to identify an offset. So to me that just really wasn't a valid concern, but we passed an amendment anyway just to clarify that any regulations that are passed or eliminated as an offset need to, obviously, take into consideration health and safety and environmental issues, as they would have to do anyway.

The second piece: that somehow or another, what we were doing would put a chill on ministries that have to pass regulations for health and safety. To that I say: That makes no sense. Ministers have two years to identify an offset for that—two years. And it doesn't have to come from that particular ministry. The government has two years to identify the offset for that. So I recognize the concerns being raised, and I recognize that some parties may park their opposition on that particular hook, but I think they're hiding behind it because it's simply not legitimate to suggest that any regulation, even if it's not for health or safety or the environment or consumer protection—any regulation a ministry needs to pass for the public good will not in any way be impacted by this legislation. Any ministry can bring forward any amendment under this provision. But over time, the government will have to ensure that they're conscious of offsetting the administrative cost to businesses as that goes forward. The public interest is always sacrosanct; the public interest will always prevail.

I would say that if a party says that they're not going to support this bill because of that provision, (1) I don't think that's a legitimate argument, and I'll be happy to listen to the arguments as we go forward; and (2) that puts that party clearly in a place where they're the party that's in favour of imposing unnecessary regulatory costs to businesses. Why would anybody in this Legislature ever want to penalize businesses without any public interest reason to do so? That's just ridiculous. It's bad for our economy. It's bad for job creation.

Every party always talks about their love of small business and the importance of small business in our economy. I think this bill is going to be a really good test, because it's a very easy bill to support. It has no detrimental public interest issues at all to it, and it does reduce the cost of doing business in this province. So I think it will be a litmus test to see which parties in this Legislature really care about reducing the costs of business for businesses in this province, whether it's big businesses or, more importantly, small businesses. Which parties in this Legislature care about keeping Ontario competitive?

We're in a good place right now. Our unemployment rate is at the lowest level it's been in 17 years. It's a good place to be. We've created 800,000 net new jobs since the global recession—a good place to be. We're leading the G7 in growth—a good place to be.

1550

But it's a fiercely competitive global economy out there, Mr. Speaker. We're competitive today; we're growing today; we're doing well today. But there is no guarantee that in this fast, disrupting, technological new economy, we're going to be there tomorrow, if we don't continue to focus on ensuring that Ontario is one of the easiest places in the world in which to do business.

I close off my comments—as I pass them on to my able parliamentary assistant, I see my good friend Tariq Zahoor is here today. We're running a little bit late. I had a meeting with Tariq Zahoor, who is a representative of the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam and has been for many, many years. In fact, I met him many years ago. He knows business as well, and I know that Tariq would say we should support this bill.

We should support all initiatives that reduce unnecessary regulatory burden. Let's be champions for those regulations that are important. Let's be champions for those regulations that improve the environment, that are good for health and safety, that are good for our workplaces and that protect our workers and protect our consumers.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, not every regulation on the books is perfect. There are many regulations on the books that are unnecessary. Let's continue our efforts to reduce those regulations. We've gotten rid of 80,000 of them, and the province is the better for it and we haven't in any way impacted health, safety or the public interest in doing that.

We will continue that effort, ensuring that our approach is balanced but effective, building a strong economy while ensuring that we protect the interests of each and every Ontarian and their family.

I'm now going to pass it on to my very able parliamentary assistant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm very pleased to rise today as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

I would like to start off by thanking the minister for his remarks introducing the third reading of this import-

ant piece of legislation, and acknowledge the hours of debate that have already occurred on this act.

Careful debate and consideration is the hallmark of our legislative process. As always, it is a privilege to take part in this long-standing and vital democratic process.

If you'll indulge, me, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his years of hard work and guidance on this important file. Thank you, Minister Duguid.

From the outset, the minister has made it clear that it is a top priority for the ministry to make Ontario the best place in the world to do business. This is a many-faceted goal, and burden reduction is just one aspect of it. We are proud of the work that has been done in this area.

I think it is important to stress a point that Minister Duguid made in his introductory remarks: Reducing the burden on businesses does not mean reducing the safeguards that protect the Ontario public.

The proposed legislative amendments in this act are intended to improve economic efficiency and foster innovation while continuing to provide strong social and environmental protections. We are committed to ensuring that saving businesses time and money does not come at the expense of worker safety and environmental and health standards.

The preamble of this act states—and I'm going to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the preamble is legally binding—"Ontario is committed to fostering a strong business climate that supports growth while ensuring appropriate regulatory oversights that protect the public, workers and the environment.

"Ontario recognizes that modern regulations protect the public interest, including health, safety and the environment, while enabling economic growth, prosperity and a competitive business climate.

"As a part of Ontario's regulatory modernization efforts, the province is committed to reducing unnecessary red tape while also ensuring the public interest is protected, and to supporting business needs and ensuring that interactions with government are efficient and straightforward."

In short, creating more user-friendly services will actually improve public protections by making it easier for businesses to understand and comply with requirements. It will also make it easier for ministries to focus on what is most important.

I want to thank the House for this opportunity to once again detail the proposed substance of the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017.

We heard from the minister and we all know that Ontario's economy is going through a period of generational renewal and modernization. Our traditional sectors are converging with transformative technologies. We must maintain our competitive edge.

The Business Growth Initiative is our strategy to accelerate a knowledge-based innovation economy and increase the province's global competitiveness. This five-year, \$650-million initiative is guided by the following principles: creating a strong, innovation-driven economy;

catapulting more Ontario businesses forward through scaling up; and lowering business costs through modernized regulations.

The last point is what spurred the writing of this legislation. The Ministry of Economic Development and Growth has introduced a package of legislative amendments that are intended to reduce regulatory burdens and practices that cost businesses time and money while, as I said, protecting environmental and health standards, enhancing work safety and achieving a cost savings for government.

The process of designing this legislation demanded great coordination and collaboration, and I would like to thank the Open for Business team for their tireless work pulling it all together.

The ministry worked with five partner ministries and is proposing amendments to more than 40 different statutes. Highlights of the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, include implementing a number of recommendations from the Business Law Advisory Council to update and reform Ontario's corporate and commercial law statutes; facilitating electronic service delivery and taking steps to enable proclamation of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act; and enabling automatic electronic service delivery and issuance of pesticide licences if prescribed requirements are met.

We have taken a holistic evidence-based approach across our ministry and the partner ministries to draft this bill. What we will be voting on is the result of countless hours of research and stakeholder outreach. It was a lot of work, but it was worth it. A smarter regulatory system will enable Ontario to lower business costs and encourage more growth.

It is time to reckon with outdated, unnecessary or unclear regulations and their compliance requirements. These regulations can take businesses away from important work that creates jobs and grows the economy. The bottom line is that it can cost billions in time and money to complete paperwork, fees and expenses, and this is so true for the small businesses across our province.

This is the second bill the government has brought forward as part of its commitment to make annual legislative changes that reduce direct and indirect regulatory burdens on Ontario businesses. You will remember that the first annual bill, the Burden Reduction Act, 2017, was passed in March 2017. The act amended more than 50 statutes from 11 different ministries to reduce regulatory burdens and practices that cost businesses time and money while protecting environmental and health standards and enhancing workers' safety. The amendments will provide Ontario businesses up to \$31 million in savings every year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the burden reduction that will occur across our ministry and our partner ministries should the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act be passed.

Schedule 4 of the bill, if passed, would introduce a brand new act called the Reducing Regulatory Costs for

Business Act, which contains five new burden initiatives, as follows:

- a requirement for government to offset new administrative costs imposed on businesses through a reduction in existing costs;

- a less onerous compliance framework for small business where appropriate;

- increasing harmonization with other jurisdictions and adopting international or national standards where appropriate when developing or reviewing regulations;

- the option for businesses to submit documents electronically to the government; and

- recognizing businesses that have a good compliance record.

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These five initiatives guided the design of the overall bill. They support the Business Growth Initiative by modernizing government lines of business, removing unnecessary regulatory burden and reforming Ontario's business laws.

The question of just how much money will be saved by implementing the changes must be addressed. The estimated cost savings were quantified for four of the five proposals above that impacted discrete sectors. It is estimated that businesses impacted by these proposals can realize between \$6.3 million to \$8.9 million in cost savings.

As I mentioned, this bill is not just the product of work by the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth. In order to make real change, we had to coordinate with other ministries, and the results, as you will see, are impressive. Here is a short synopsis of the changes that our partner ministries will make. While this list is exhaustive, it should not be considered comprehensive.

The Ministry of the Attorney General's proposed changes include amendments to the Charities Accounting Act that would allow charities to make social investments that help further their purposes and achieve a financial return. The amendments will allow charitable organizations to make social investments consistent with their mission by exempting these types of investments from restrictive prudent investor rules.

Currently, the law is not clear whether charities can make social investments. The amendments will specifically authorize charities to make such investments. It will give charities more flexibility and another tool to use their assets more effectively. This amendment in particular will position Ontario as the leader in facilitating social investing activities. I should note, as well, that there are a number of safeguards that will be imposed to maintain the public's trust and confidence in charities.

As well, a number of amendments will be made to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act, including:

- clarifying that people over the age of 64 may apply to become judges and justices of the peace;

- designating the Superior Court of Justice to manage complaints against the Small Claims Court administrative judge, including giving the Superior Court of Justice the

power to investigate complaints and, if appropriate, discipline the judge for his or her conduct; and

—making certain tribunal costs orders under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement enforceable as court orders. The change would preserve the ability of Ontario businesses and the Ontario government to challenge trade barriers in other provinces and territories.

The Notaries Act will be amended to remove the requirement for a non-lawyer notary public to be a Canadian citizen.

The Juries Act will also be amended to permit electronic options for jurors to return their jury eligibility questionnaires and to receive jury summonses. The deadline for returning a jury questionnaire will be extended from five to 30 days.

Other technical and housekeeping amendments will be made to modernize outdated wording in French and in English, and to improve accessibility.

From our partners at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services there were a number of proposed amendments. The Land Registration Reform Act will be amended to allow electronic registration of survey plans. Electronic submission and registration of plans will reduce the burden on land surveyors, saving these small business owners the time and the cost of registering hard copy plans.

The Land Titles Act will be amended to allow for a single name to be used to register documents within the land registration system where that single name is permitted under the Vital Statistics Act and the Change of Name Act.

The proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act would increase shareholder democracy and increase flexibility in private corporations. The proposed amendments would enable the future proclamation of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, ONCA.

The proposed amendments to the Corporations Act would enable Ontario not-for-profit corporations to benefit from some of the ONCA features prior to its proclamation, such as allowing notice of members' meetings to be sent electronically and members' meetings to be held electronically. These proposed amendments would increase flexibility, encourage participation in meetings, provide clarity and reduce burdens and costs for not-for-profit corporations.

The proposed amendments to the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000 would increase clarity in Ontario's franchise law, including franchiser and disclosure obligations to prospective franchisees.

The proposed amendments to the Personal Property Security Act would reduce costs to lenders, lessors and repairers by providing greater certainty.

The amendments to the Corporations Information Act, and a number of other business law statutes, will facilitate implementation of the new modern business registration system and ensure that related provisions are appropriately aligned, including:

—modernizing service delivery and enabling electronic access to all modern business registration system services;

—providing the director with broadened duties and powers to support and implement more efficient and flexible service delivery under a new electronic system; and

—making amendments to provide greater consistency across the business law statutes and enable a future business law reform agenda.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs proposed amendments to the Municipal Elections Act that would provide clarity that compliance audit committees, established in all municipalities across the province prior to municipal elections, may deliberate in private for the purpose of making decisions; and provide more consistency across the province; and may also prevent the use of "stock" written decisions that are prepared in advance due to the inability of compliance audit committee members to meet and speak in private.

I should add that the above issue has been raised by a number of municipalities recently. As well, the issue was raised by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO. AMO takes the position that a legislative change is required to address this issue.

Our partners at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change proposed amendments to the Pesticides Act. These would:

—transition the pesticide licensing program from paper-based to online service delivery;

—allow licences to be issued automatically online if prescribed requirements are met; and

—eliminate approximately 5,200 paper-based applications the ministry receives each year, providing a faster, more efficient way to get a licence.

The proposed amendments to the Environmental Protection Act will allow the ministry to make certain information about pesticide licences publicly available online, supporting a transparent and open government.

To respond to business needs while maintaining environmental protection, the ministry is implementing an ongoing transformational agenda, using a risk-based approach while reducing regulatory burden on businesses and enhancing program service delivery.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the proposal is for the appointment of multiple vice-chairs to the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board. This amendment would increase the board's capacity to manage the hearing process. It would shorten wait times for hearings by alleviating the burden of only having two members capable of chairing a hearing. And it would shorten wait times for decisions by alleviating the burden of only having two members capable of writing decisions.

The reason behind all of these amendments is straightforward: It is to improve economic efficiency and foster innovation, while continuing to provide strong social and environmental protections. The list of proposed amendments are, at their heart, about reducing regulatory burden by eliminating duplication, decreasing unnecessary regulatory requirements and improving government services to save businesses time, money and resources,

and make it easier and less expensive to run a business in Ontario.

Of course, the measures I just detailed are only some of the burden-reduction activities the government is undertaking. There is a lot more that is being done in this area. As I mentioned, it is a key pillar of the Business Growth Initiative and as such has been a top priority for our ministry.

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At this point, I think it would be instructive to take a look at some of the other burden reduction efforts we have undertaken.

We have committed to releasing an annual burden reduction report. The report profiles initiatives that are reducing burdens and making it easier for business and other stakeholders to succeed, including providing more online services, simplifying processes and modernizing regulation. The latest annual report, released on June 27, 2017, features an estimated savings of \$152 million and 6.5 million hours to businesses and other external stakeholders since 2011. This surpasses, by more than 50%, the government's target of saving \$100 million by the end of 2017.

As a ministry, we also conducted Open for Business round tables in 10 sectors and addressed 50 priority items, including:

- a reduction in length of the WSIB No Lost Time form, form 7, by 60%;
- standardized food premises inspection reporting and food handler training programs;
- speeding up water-taking permits for low-impact construction and road-building projects; and
- streamlining the number of permits required for development of residential subdivisions.

We are also implementing measures, under Ontario's regulatory policy, to ensure new regulations are well developed and avoid imposing unnecessary costs on business. Tools and processes include:

- a regulatory impact analysis, to ensure costs and benefits of significant regulations are understood before regulations are approved;
- a mandatory review policy, to ensure that outdated or redundant regulations with high impact on businesses are regularly revisited, and amended or eliminated if necessary;
- twice-annual effective dates, to make Ontario's business climate more predictable by requiring new regulations affecting business to come into effect twice a year, on January 1 and July 1, so businesses can plan ahead; and

—a regulatory registry, to make business regulations more transparent by allowing 45 days for comments on new regulatory proposals. In 2016, there were approximately 400,000 visitors to the site, and 232 postings, which include regulatory proposals and discussion papers, and 1,054 comments received from the public.

In conclusion, after third reading, if passed, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, will be an

important part of our ongoing efforts to make Ontario the best and easiest place in the world to do business.

Nothing gives me more pride, and nothing makes me more proud, than when I get to travel this province on behalf of Minister Duguid, representing our government, to hear the various businesses from various sectors talking about how impressed they are that their company objectives are very much in line with those of this government, and that we all want the best for the businesses in our province, and that is to make life easier for them, especially those small businesses, and to ensure that we continue to attract the businesses that continue to make Ontario the best place to live, work and play.

I often ask this question of those I meet when I travel the province—because when you're in this House, you hear so many different things. I often ask them, "So tell me: Is it true or is it not true that businesses are moving out of the province, businesses are leaving Ontario?" They laugh at me, Mr. Speaker, and say, "Christina, nothing is further from the truth." We continue to grow our businesses here in Ontario; we continue to attract highly skilled workers here in Ontario; and we continue to attract the investments that we need to make sure that our province continues to grow.

Just earlier this month, I was in Guelph. I was at Linamar for a very special graduation that evening. They said to me, "You know what, Christina? We went from 5,000 employees here in our company, and within eight years, we've doubled the number of employees." They are at 10,000 employees right now at Linamar.

So it is always good to get out there and visit people and businesses across this province to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the staff to ascertain whether or not there's a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Speaker, a quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I go back to the member for Davenport to resume.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As I was saying, as important as the work that we do here in this House is, it's just as important to be out in our communities, to be out across the province and to talk to the businesses to get that reality check. What I have found every time I've gone out and every time I've spoken to people within our province about this notion that we have companies leaving the province, they just laugh at me and say, "Cristina, that's nothing. That's so far from the truth." We're actually attracting the businesses that we need to make sure that we continue to make our province grow.

In conclusion, what I want to say here is that our highest priority is to make Ontario a place for businesses to invest and grow and continue the great work that we

are doing here in this province. This bill will help us to create the high-quality jobs that will propel this province into the future. I want to remind this House that just in the month of September we created 35,000 new jobs. Our unemployment rate is 5.6%. This is the lowest unemployment rate since July 2000.

At the same time, we want to make sure that this bill protects the health and safety and prosperity of Ontarians. I urge—we urge—the opposition and third party to think about the impact these measures would have on fostering a more competitive business climate in Ontario and vote in favour of this bill later today. As we heard from the minister when he was wrapping up his time earlier this afternoon, this is not a political bill. This is a non-partisan bill. This is not a bill that we're going to talk about when we're out knocking on doors. But this is a bill that you're either going to support or you're not going to support. The way you vote, the way you show support for this bill, will clearly demonstrate whether or not you stand up for the businesses that we have in Ontario, whether you stand up for the small businesses that are the ones that are so overly burdened by unnecessary red tape. I urge everyone to think about how you're going to vote on this bill and to support this bill later today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will be doing my one-hour lead on third reading of Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, very shortly, but I would like to bring to the attention of this debate that we've had some very, very significant job losses in the province. The government members should recognize that we have lost hundreds of thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province, jobs that have been lost at Ford Talbotville; I think of Westcast Industries in my riding, in Strathroy; Caterpillar and Heinz in southwestern Ontario; General Electric—the list goes on and on and on. These were 400,000 well-paying jobs.

I'll talk about this, Mr. Speaker, but in this piece of legislation, it doesn't actually go far enough. By the government's own numbers, they're going to save businesses between \$6 million and \$8 million per year. This is when third-party studies have shown that red tape is costing businesses \$14 billion. So it's a very small amount. The government could have taken further action.

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But the other things affecting employment in the province, Mr. Speaker, besides red tape, are that we have ever-growing debt in the province, electricity bills—we saw in the long-term energy plan that bills are set to go up even further in the years ahead—and also the minimum wage hike. I know that all MPPs are hearing from small businesses and the non-profits in their communities about the impact on jobs that the minimum wage hike is going to have. I'm looking forward to debating this bill further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let's remember that Bill 154 has 11 schedules in it. We are supportive of all the schedules, with the exception of schedule 4. Specifically around schedule 4, we take issue with sections 2, 4, 7 and 8. But we are not alone. At committee, the minister referenced that some concerns were brought forward. He called those concerns off-base. He dismissed those concerns. But these are the people that came to speak to us: the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Toronto Environmental Alliance, Earthroots, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Greenpeace, Wildlands League, Northwatch, LEAF, Ecojustice, Ontario Nature, and the Pembina Institute.

Their concerns? "Although there's some nice rhetoric in the preamble, in the substance of the bill it seems to be privileging economy over the environment," said Keith Brooks, the programs director of the Toronto-based organization Environment Defence." This is from today's Toronto Star, and this is the headline: "Ontario Plan to Cut Red Tape Could Create New Risks, Critics Say."

They wrote an open letter to the Premier, so the Premier is well aware of the concerns of these groups.

According to the amendments that the government put forward that the PA has also referenced and that the minister says wasn't even necessary, the amendment to the bill made by the committee last week said that there were supposed to be protections of the public interest, including health and safety. Yet this was an afterthought for Bill 154, Mr. Speaker. We should learn from the history of this province. Walkerton was not that far away, was not that long ago.

Why craft a piece of legislation with health and safety as an afterthought? It is irresponsible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: As a rough measure of whether we are in the golden mean and going down the right path, as you will know, Speaker, with reference to Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, the NDP is warning us that we may be going too far and the Conservatives are warning us that we are not going far enough, which tells us that the centrist Wynne government, moving forward in a balanced and, I would say, harmonious manner, is probably the right way to go, just as a rough-measure rule of thumb.

There are a number of business leaders, of course, Speaker, who have come out in support of this particular bill. I would also say that I think it's a kind of applied intelligence, with reference to this bill, about the \$1—for example, if a new regulation incurs \$1 of cost in implementing it, there will be an offset of \$1.25.

I can engage the honourable member from Lanark and other names there—I appreciate his definition of whether it was necessary red tape or unnecessary red tape. We'll deal with that in the next mandate.

The point is, Speaker, that this is an important bill. Obviously, Ontario is open for business, as, for example,

the presidency of OpenText says, "We are an Ontario-grown global company. And we chose to invest here because of the highly educated workforce, our strong university partnerships in R&D, as well as the province's robust and innovative start-up communities." Of course, Speaker, Bill 154, this issue to cut unnecessary red tape, is yet another part of that pillar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's always a pleasure to join the debate. I see that the member from Etobicoke is still confused about the difference between necessary red tape and unnecessary red tape. That confusion reigns throughout the Liberal caucus; it's not exclusive to the member from Etobicoke. Again, I'll reiterate for their edification that red tape by its very definition is unnecessary. Red tape, by its definition, impedes, obstructs and prohibits timely, effective or efficient delivery, so this bill that is focusing on unnecessary red tape is a bit of a misnomer.

I think it was clearly identified by the member from Etobicoke that it also infers that there is indeed necessary red tape; there is a necessity for this government to impede, restrict, prohibit and prevent the timely and efficient delivery of services. They see this as something that they are proud of: to prohibit, restrict and prevent services. Speaker, we all know this. Every member in this Legislature who answers the phone or reads emails from their constituents knows that our administration is fraught with red tape and, I will say, unnecessary red tape. This bill does very, very little, if anything, to remedy that failure of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. I want to start off by thanking the members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Kitchener-Waterloo, Etobicoke North and Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I want to thank them for weighing in on this bill, this bill that will help create the high-quality jobs that we definitely want to continue to propel in this province and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister said earlier, really it's the small businesses that are burdened by this unnecessary red tape. It's important that we address the unnecessary red tape that these small businesses face. That's what this bill proposes to do: unnecessary red tape in general, overall, across all sectors, across all business sizes in the province of Ontario, but really how it's affecting small businesses.

As the member who represents a riding, the riding of Davenport, that is home to so many small businesses, I want to make sure that these businesses continue to thrive, that they are put in a position where they're going to continue to ensure the health and safety and the environmental protections of their workers, their employees and everyone around them, but that they're also going to be able to conduct their businesses more efficiently and more expeditiously and be able to continue to compete in this changing workplace that we have here in the province of Ontario.

To date we have eliminated just over 80,000 regulatory burdens over the years, and we are actually seen as a global regulatory best practice. All eyes continue to be on the province of Ontario to see the great work that we are doing here to continue to attract the businesses that are making our province thrive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to once again speak to Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. I did a one-hour lead not that long ago on second reading. We got through committee fairly quickly. I remember, during second reading—

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, the Chair did a marvellous job at that committee, but I started second reading by congratulating Minister Duguid on his announcement that he was going to be moving on from politics. I also thanked his staff; they did a great job briefing us in my office.

I want to start by thanking Jena Sasko in my office, who has done a lot of work on this bill and many others in the last number of years. She has met with stakeholders and we've gathered a lot of information throughout this whole process. It's important, I think, for all of us to thank our staff, and I owe her a lot of credit on this bill and others.

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As I said a few minutes ago, the cost of this red tape to our economy is estimated at about \$14 billion per year. That's \$14 billion. There have been a number of third-party studies that have validated that the cost to this economy, again, is \$14 billion, so obviously this is an important topic.

Our Progressive Conservative caucus supports reducing burdensome red tape, eliminating redundancies and streamlining regulations. As I said during second reading debate, we will be supporting this bill.

Businesses in this province have a lot going against them because of this Liberal government and the decisions that they've made over the last 14 years. There's a lot we need to do to improve the business environment, but just getting government out of the way is a good start. To steal a quote from someone whom I admire, and I've said this a number of times: The Ontario government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

When we hear members on the opposite side talk about how rosy things are in the province, I'd like to remind them, especially on behalf of members in southwestern Ontario, that we've lost hundreds of thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs. I don't want members in this House to forget workplaces that used to exist, like Ford Talbotville, Westcast Industries, Caterpillar, Heinz and General Electric. That list goes on and on and on. Red tape and the overregulations that we have in this province contribute to those companies looking elsewhere.

Unfortunately, Speaker, this is another red tape bill that seems to be aimed more at housekeeping and generating feel-good messaging than actually alleviating the burden on business. Although saying that, it is a bill that we would like to see passed as quickly as possible because there is very little that's going to happen the day we pass this bill. There's probably going to be a significant delay before we might actually see some benefits. That's because there isn't much to this bill other than non-binding directives to the ministries, and we're going to have to wait to see what the uptick is on these initiatives.

There are—as everyone will know now after hours of debate—two parts to this bill. The first is the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, which consists of five new initiatives to be applied broadly. The second half is omnibus style legislation that amends many existing acts. Today, I'm going to be focusing my comments on the first portion of the bill. Frankly, there isn't much to the latter half of this piece of legislation.

I applaud the Minister of Economic Development for bringing forward some good ideas in the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act to help get Ontario's red tape under control. I fully support reducing administrative costs by requiring \$1.25 in savings to be found for every dollar in new regulatory costs. Being sensitive to small business resource limitations is something I would have hoped was already happening in government, but it is certainly better late than never.

I have much the same feeling about calling for greater harmonization with national and international standards, as well as rewarding compliance.

Increasing the validation of electronic document filing and communications is another initiative that is past due.

But while I applaud the minister for these ideas, it's hard for me to be optimistic about this bill because experience wins out over hope here. I simply don't have faith that this government will take the action necessary to make these reforms actually mean something to the businesses across the province.

I heard a great catch-all term for recent Liberal legislation from the member from Oshawa, which is very applicable to Bill 154. It was “detail-free, enabling legislation.” That's what we seem to be seeing a lot of from the government, Mr. Speaker: bills that delegate new powers, that issue broad directives or set out aspirational objectives, but don't take direct action.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Stretch goals.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Stretch goals, as my colleague says.

I talked about this in my leadoff for second reading of this bill. This is basically a very nice list of goals, and we all know how positive it can feel to lay out a list of ambitious goals or New Year's resolutions, but the list doesn't actually accomplish anything. You only get results if there's commitment, follow-through and a real desire for change, and I don't think this government has it. Old habits die hard, Mr. Speaker, and the Liberal government can't seem to shake the habit of growing

government and bureaucracy here in the province of Ontario.

My colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has a great analogy—and I hope I get it right, Mr. Speaker—about this government and its problem with red tape, and I'd like to invoke it again here today. I once recall hearing that he likened the government to an apple tree that has just kept growing and growing for over 14 years, and when you let a tree just grow like that, it gets twisted and gnarled until it can't produce fruit. Just like you have to prune and trim an apple tree, this Liberal government needs a significant pruning and trimming of the gnarled policies and legislation that they keep coming up with. I think I got that right.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Pretty good.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I think he summed that up quite rightly.

Speaker, Bill 154 doesn't do much in the way of pruning. The part of this bill which is intended to clean up existing legislation is pretty much a housekeeping bill. It corrects discrepancies between English and French translations of bills. It makes accessibility amendments that just change graphics on websites. It does away with legislation that was introduced to deal with the last vestiges of slavery. It includes the enabling legislation to move the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act toward proclamation and makes it more consistent with the Business Corporations Act—something you would think would have been dealt with when the legislation was conceived.

This bill is called the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, but if this is all the government can come up with, then it seems like they think there's just a ton of necessary red tape, which I thought was an oxymoron, but apparently the Liberals seem to think you can have both unnecessary and necessary red tape.

In the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's recently released Vote Prosperity, they highlighted red-tape reduction as a pressing concern. I'd like to read just a small excerpt from the report that summarizes why this is a problem in need of a much more comprehensive solution:

“Ontario is a great place to live and work, but the foundation of our prosperity is shifting. Through extensive research, we have identified several factors that limit business growth in the province, from lacklustre exports to an elevated cost of living to decreased labour force participation. These factors, coupled with high input costs such as rising electricity prices, a cap-and-trade regime, onerous labour law reforms and a burdensome regulatory environment, mean the cost of doing business in Ontario is high relative to our competitor jurisdictions.” I know this is something I've raised many times, and many in our caucus have raised the same concern, that Ontario is a more expensive place to do business, to grow a business and to create jobs.

The report goes on to more specifically address the impact of the province's burdensome regulatory environment, saying, “Overregulation imposes the equivalent of an additional 5% to 15% import tariff on small busi-

nesses compared to larger firms, due to small firms' inability to appropriately navigate the regulatory environment. With 380,000 regulations (by the government's own count), Ontario is the most administered province in the country, harming business competitiveness."

Speaker, just to reiterate, this report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce called *Vote Prosperity* says, "With 380,000 regulations ... Ontario is the most administered province in the country, harming business competitiveness." That's shameful, Mr. Speaker, especially when this government has had 14 years to truly reduce the regulatory environment for the business community in Ontario. That's a deeply troubling analysis.

The government, through regulation, is imposing a 5% to 15% penalty to small businesses. Most small businesses are working with pretty fine margins, especially those that are just starting out. What a discouraging message for them to receive about how burdensome and demanding regulation is of their resources, and all the more so when their larger competitors don't have the same issue. This is a hidden tax on small business and it is another issue of fairness and an example of this government's policies disproportionately impacting the little guys.

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This is not the message we want to send when we're trying to encourage people to start and grow businesses in the province of Ontario. If we want innovators to go into business, we need to allow them to focus on their business and what they're good at, not drown them out in paperwork and siphon away precious resources.

This bill proposes that future regulations be sensitive to the constraints of small business. It sets out that, where appropriate, government should have less onerous compliance requirements to apply to small businesses. Speaker, we all know the stats. This province has over 407,000 small businesses, and over 87% of people in Ontario are employed by small or medium-sized businesses. They are absolutely vital to our economy and our province's success. Responsible governance requires a consideration of cost versus benefit, and accountable governance requires that the public has some idea of how the government is spending their money. Too often, this is simply not the case here in Ontario.

It's great that this is in the bill, but I find it incredibly discouraging that the government is only just now going to start being sensitive to small business resource limitations. These businesses have different issues and different risks, and they have been particularly hard hit by this government as they struggle to bear the cost of electricity and the sudden, rapid rise in minimum wage.

Most are already running as lean as they possibly can with the minimum of staff, so pulling a manager or a business owner away from their regular work is a real burden. Unfortunately, this is another case where Bill 154 doesn't actually do anything. It relies entirely on the government having good follow-through. I would like to hear from the minister how he intends to monitor the success of this proposal, or from other ministers about

how they might implement this. Because my fear is that this is an idea that will live and die within the confines of a Ministry of Economic Development press release.

Reducing red tape is something I believe strongly in. Red tape is one of the key issues our party is committed to addressing, because we recognize that unnecessary and complex regulations not only add costs, but they create a disincentive for new and expanding investment decisions.

In the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' most recent report on business confidence, they have reported for Ontario that "short-term hiring plans have become negative for the first time since the end of 2013 with one in five business owners looking to layoff staffing while 15% are looking to hire. About 43% of business owners say their firms are in good shape, while 9% are in bad shape."

One of the reasons I bring up red tape reduction time and time again is because it really is one of the most equitable ways in which we can create a more competitive business environment here in Ontario. So many of the initiatives this government undertakes are to help out a chosen few, leaving other businesses that are just as likely to succeed in a free market scenario at a disadvantage. For example, they pile on costs by adopting cap-and-trade, but then don't allow low-emitting small and medium-sized businesses to offset those costs with credits for their efficiencies. They introduced the industrial conservation initiative program to help high-energy-use manufacturers reduce their hydro bills; again, another initiative that helps a select few to cope with energy costs, while leaving the small and medium-sized businesses to fend for themselves. Or they hand out grants to select companies that are, in effect, funded by the taxes paid by their competitors. Having the government pick winners and losers like this is simply not a fair or effective economic development strategy. Every business should have the opportunity to succeed in Ontario.

The Fraser Institute recently reported on the way in which different jurisdictions compete for investment. This article was precipitated by Amazon's announcement of plans to open a second North American headquarters, which has led to a lot of jockeying for advantage from cities across Canada and the United States. The authors had this to say:

"So what's the right way to attract businesses to a city, state or province?

"To start, simplified, across-the-board tax policy goes a long way in helping businesses large and small navigate the tax code, rather than a piecemeal approach involving sweetheart deals for some but not others. It shouldn't be government's job to pick winners and losers.

"Governments can also reduce the regulatory burden on business. More red tape—found in approval processes, zoning codes and permits—faced by entrepreneurs means more resources allocated to regulatory compliance and less allocated to growing their businesses. By streamlining or reducing regulation, government can help firms focus on what matters—creating jobs and growing the economy.

"These moves may not be as politically attractive as public grandstanding, but in the long run, they attract business investment and jobs. They can also help even the playing field between small businesses and larger ones, as larger businesses are better resourced to navigate complex regulations. Rather than helping today's corporate giants, why not encourage tomorrow's?"

What I found very interesting is that Ed Clark, the Premier's appointee, seems to agree. Despite the Liberal record of handing out big grants to hand-selected companies, the man they have appointed to lead the greater Toronto region's effort to lure Amazon to the GTA was reported by the *Globe and Mail* to have said, "Providing large taxpayer subsidies to the firm wouldn't be fair to other companies that have set up shop in Ontario with little or no government assistance."

Speaker, that article goes on to say, "The region's bid to Amazon founder ... will highlight other strengths such as the province's skilled workforce," Clark said, adding that the province would be willing to make other contributions like helping the company secure land.

"There are clearly places in the United States that will, I use the word, bribe, people to come," he said. "(They) say you just tell us what cheque you want us to write, we will write that cheque. We're not in that business."

"If that's what Amazon is looking for, Ontario will not win, said Clark...."

Speaker, I have a long record in this House of saying very much the same thing. We need to be creating a level playing field and making Ontario the best place to do business, period—not for a hand-picked few, not for the pet causes of the government of the day. We need to be the best place for any company that wants to do business.

As legislators, we should be working to ensure that Ontario's businesses are able to compete on an equal footing at home and that they aren't working at a disadvantage to the companies based out of other jurisdictions, which is an area in which this government has fallen down. Our businesses are paying more for energy than their competitors, they wait longer for approvals, and they have a government that keeps throwing them curveballs like the threat, at one point, of the ORPP or cap-and-trade or the sudden hike in the minimum wage.

Given that this Liberal government has been in power for almost 15 years, you would think businesses would at least be able to expect some stability. This is an important factor, because when you have a chaotic regulatory environment, it increases the perception of risk. If businesses and families feel there is uncertainty in the market, then they're going to be less likely to spend disposable income or invest in equipment or take on new workers.

The Ontario chamber has raised concerns about this as well, saying, "The BPI is currently near a 15-year high. Unfortunately, this is not an indication of production prosperity, but a perception of fewer opportunities and higher risk.... This has led to a preference for the main-

tenance of ... operations ... rather than growth"—and the accumulation of financial flexibility.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago, as did the Minister of Economic Development, to address the Chemical Industry Association of Canada. Their industry is really an interesting one to look at in terms of the trends they're experiencing, because I think there are some very worrying indications about Ontario's ability to attract investment. I know my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton has raised this issue a number of times as well.

To start with, this is an industry that is experiencing growth and success in North America. Many of the companies in that industry are multinational, which is increasingly common across industries. It is a shift that has changed the nature of competition for new investment capital between different jurisdictions. In a multinational company, you're competing within your own organization, often against US-based facilities. When that sort of competition takes place within an organization, it's a very direct comparison between jurisdictions.

We've all heard stories about companies waiting months and years to bring new machinery into use because of red tape and bureaucratic delays. Just imagine how that sort of unnecessary delay looks to a multinational company weighing a decision about where to expand operations.

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Let's look at the evidence in the case of the chemistry industry; what has that more direct comparison yielded? Unfortunately, the result has been our share of North American investment activity diminishing. Before 2010, the average sat at around 10%, but since that time it has been dropping. That's a trend our Conservative caucus wants to see turn around. There's great success being enjoyed on the other side of the border thanks to the chemistry industry. I understand that in the current business cycle, the CIAC's American peer association is tracking 300 global-scale chemistry investments worth over \$250 billion—those are in US dollars, Speaker—and 70% of that is foreign direct investment. That doesn't even account for the additional 700 investments in the downstream plastics sector. That is growth we need to attract here in Ontario, and I know the CIAC is working hard to bring it here, but government needs to be working to make sure they have the best possible opportunity to do that.

The World Bank, in their *Doing Business 2017* report, ranked countries based on how business friendly their regulatory systems are. Canada ranked 22nd, putting us behind countries like the US, the UK, Australia, Iceland, New Zealand and Denmark. Ontario, obviously, has a disproportionate weight when Canada is considered as a whole, and so I think that statistic also speaks to the need to make improvements right here in our province. Companies should be dedicating resources to developing their businesses, not complying with unnecessary or redundant regulations.

Steven Globerman, writing for the Fraser Forum, looked at issues the United States has had around over-

regulation and issued this warning for us here on the other side of the border:

"One prominent potential explanation of the US productivity slowdown is government regulation. The accumulation of such regulations diverts productive resources that might be used for other purposes such as research and development and capital investment in order to fulfill regulatory obligations. This diversion can contribute to slower productivity growth and reduced overall real economic growth.

"Indeed, a recent study published by the Mercatus Center covering 22 US industries over the period 1977-2012 found that federal government regulations—by distorting investment choices that lead to innovation—created a drag on the US economy amounting to an average reduction in the annual growth rate of the US gross domestic product of 0.8%. If regulations had been held constant at levels observed in 1980, US per capita income would be more than \$13,000 higher than it is currently.

"The US productivity experience should be a cautionary tale for legislators everywhere, including Canada. Regulations are difficult to remove once implemented, as they create groups in society with vested interests in preserving regulations that shield those groups from direct or indirect competition. The available evidence suggests that there is a potentially large economic payoff to eliminating regulations that have net social costs, as well as to forbearing from implementing new regulations with unfavourable benefit-cost ratios."

Obviously, the health and safety of the people of Ontario is our foremost concern here when we consider legislation, and the Minister of Economic Development made that quite clear. I believe that bureaucracy holds to that same standard. If that's not the case, then we have a much larger problem on our hands here in Ontario. But I truly believe that everyone within the different ministries will ensure that health and safety exists for workers in the province.

Considering cost and benefits of new regulations should not be a scary prospect; it's a very basic level of accountability to expect. We have more regulations in Ontario than in any other Canadian jurisdiction, so I think it's alarmist to say that the minute we start to pare that down, we're going to end up with a health crisis. If that's the case, there would have to be a lot of other things that are broken in the system and across government.

Speaker, during the second reading debate, I listened with interest to what many of my colleagues from the NDP had to say. They seem to be of two minds about this bill, on the one hand saying it doesn't accomplish much and that many of these changes are overdue, but also saying that it's extremely dangerous to cut regulations, and urging the government to create stronger regulations. Reading between the lines, I think the heart of the issue they have around health and safety concerns is not that the regulations are inadequate, but that they are inadequately enforced.

I think that's a legitimate concern. There are many very necessary health and safety regulations, but the failure to enforce these necessary regulations is often the result of a lack of resources, which is really why we need to separate the wheat from the chaff here, so the focus can be on the bad actors and the critical situations instead of on the enforcement of some of these regulations.

That's one of the reasons I wholeheartedly support the proposed initiative to reward compliance. If a business is consistently compliant, then it doesn't serve anybody to have inspectors keep showing up every two months to that plant, for example. Better that they come every four or six months, which would mean that company doesn't have to devote as many resources to proving compliance, and that inspector can spend more time focusing on companies that have a record of failing to meet standards. That's a win for compliant companies, for the government and for workers.

Speaker, it's another idea which is very good in principle but, again, the language of the bill—that ministries should "recognize businesses that demonstrate excellent compliance"—is extremely vague. I know there are too many programs and particulars for the details of such recognition to be explicitly laid out, but it leaves businesses once again to just wish and hope that this will lead to something useful. I would like to hear from some of the members on the opposite side, in the government, on what their plans are for putting this particular directive into action.

Along the same lines, Bill 154 will make electronic document filing the default, with exceptions being made on a case-by-case basis. Specifically, it lays out that when a business is required, for any reason, to submit documents to a ministry of the government of Ontario in order to comply with a regulation, they may, at the option of the business, submit the documents electronically. I think most people would assume that this would already be the norm here in Ontario. In this day and age, this shouldn't be a measure a government is introducing with fanfare. This is just a rare application of common sense by this government, I suppose, and that's enough to get everyone excited.

But even this step is not all it might appear to be. In fact, this is really just a suggestion to the ministries, and the government isn't able to say how broadly it might actually be applied.

I understand that while this legislation is being considered, the Ministry of Economic Development is working concurrently with the other ministries in government to implement this, but they can't say how widely electronic document submission will actually be used.

I haven't heard yet from any ministers who intend to take sweeping action as a result of this directive. I hope maybe to hear some specific examples as we continue the debate of this bill during third reading.

Again, Speaker, it's a nice thought. It's more than reasonable, and something I think most people would take for granted as already being in place. But I hope this will in fact be broadly applied and actually become the

norm of the government of Ontario. It's a good measure, but we'll have to wait to see whether this proposal has any substantive impact.

Ontario businesses are struggling with input costs. That's what you hear over and over when you talk directly to business owners and managers, from related reports and organizations: the cost of energy, the cost of labour, rising taxes and fees.

CFIB conservatively estimated that regulations cost Ontario's businesses upwards of \$15 billion back in 2014, a figure that had been steadily on the rise for the 10 years prior to that—all under this government, of course, under Dalton McGuinty and now Premier Wynne.

Bill 154, an omnibus bill which runs almost 200 pages, is only offering the entirety of the private sector between \$6.3 million and almost \$9 million in cost savings. It's not enough. In fact, Speaker, it's not nearly enough.

Businesses were already struggling to cope with energy costs before they had the sudden hike in the minimum wage thrown at them. That's now being topped off with concerns about NAFTA and their ability to buy, sell and compete across the border.

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A substantive effort to make it easier and less expensive for these companies to comply with regulation could have gone a little way to show Ontario's business community that the government isn't actively working against them. That is the impression that many speakers have at this point in time, whether I'm out meeting with a local family farm or a small business. My background—and I know other members of this House come from a small-business background—you often feel that government is out to get you, that they're against you. Whether it's the energy costs in Ontario, the sudden minimum wage hike that caught every not-for-profit and small business in the province off guard, or what the federal Liberal government is doing, the business community in Ontario just doesn't feel appreciated.

The Minister of Economic Development likes to tout his accolades from CFIB, but it bears mentioning what they're actually praising, which in their 2017 report was the introduction of the Red Tape Challenge and consulting with two sectors. The CFIB also mentions that the government has received hundreds of submissions covering more than 200 regulations. To me that reads more like a lot of talk from the government and conclusive evidence that there's a strong appetite for red tape reduction from Ontario's businesses.

The number of regulations in this province and the economic toll that they take have been steadily increasing since this Liberal government came to power in 2003. Their record is pretty clear at this point. They like to talk a lot about getting rid of red tape, but all that comes from it is a bill like this, which has some nice ideas but no real mechanism to enforce them and which makes a bunch of little technical amendments and inconsequential changes.

I would like to take the time now—this was brought forward at committee, but I would like to highlight, once

again, the efforts of my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, MPP Steve Clark, who has been working to cut red tape for car dealers. He introduced a private member's bill a year ago, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016, and reintroduced it as Bill 3 after prorogation. His bill would have amended the Highway Traffic Act to allow registered motor vehicle dealers to use electronic means to apply for a permit, number plates or a validation for a vehicle, to apply for a new permit for a vehicle, or to apply for a used-vehicle information package. It would have allowed the Minister of Transportation to monitor the success of the program and add more services to the list through regulation. This would have helped Ontario's 1,000 new car dealers save time and money and given them the tools to provide better customer service.

We tried to get this passed as an amendment to Bill 154, since it's a straightforward measure—a lot of common sense here—and very much in keeping with the stated intent of this bill. But unfortunately, we weren't able to get that through at committee, which is really a shame because it would have given at least someone some immediate and tangible benefit from Bill 154, this particular bill.

One group this bill really isn't doing anything for is our farmers. I would like to highlight one specific concern I've heard from farmers in my riding in particular, and that's the paperwork associated with neonics. Whatever you might think about neonics, I don't think anybody wants farmers having to take days and days away from their work to fill out forms. It's a concern that is summed up well in this article from Farmers Forum written by Tom Collins:

“Western Ontario: Angered by hours of neonic paperwork: Expect one hour of paperwork for every 100 acres—many more hours to test for insects.

“Kent county”—Speaker, I'm going to read this article: “New and controversial provincial seed regulations mean that some farmers spend days filling out the needed paperwork to be allowed to use insecticide seed treatments called neonicotinoids this spring.

“Trevor Crowe, of Reynolds Farms in eastern Ontario, spent about 40 hours filling out the forms for 4,000 acres. That didn't include the half-day course required to use neonics or the actual scouting for pests. His father Lloyd did the scouting, which added several weeks and many hours as Lloyd had to dig the government-required five holes for every 100 acres—that's 800 holes over 4,000 acres—to set bait for wireworms and grubs.

““You can tell somebody from the city wrote (the regulations),” said Trevor. “They didn't really think of the actual scope of work that would be required to implement something like this. It's just not realistic at all for our size of farm.”

“Most farmers report that it has taken about an hour of paperwork for every 100 acres.

“Ontario provincial regulations came into effect last year that require farmers to conduct pest assessments before being allowed to use neonic-treated corn and

soybean seeds on more than 50% of their fields in 2016. Farmers will need a pest assessment on all fields that use neonics starting in 2017 with the goal of an 80% reduction. Almost all of the corn seeds in Ontario and 60% of soybean seeds were previously treated with neonics. The province argues that neonics are killing honeybees. The Grain Farmers of Ontario (GFO) says the province is short on science and is siding with environmentalists.

"Mark Thomson, who farms with his brother Joe at Parkhill," in the great riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, "estimated it would take about 40 hours to fill out the paperwork for his 4,500 acres including custom work.

"'It's a pain in the ass,' he said. 'It's just going to be another thing you've got to sit in your office and do. It's more paperwork, and there's enough paperwork already. These are all going to go to OMAFRA. They're going to be thrown in the corner, and probably nobody's going to look at them....'

"GFO director Mark Huston wasn't finished the paperwork by February 1, but said a conservative estimate is it would take him 10 hours....

"Huston said farmers are frustrated by the amount of work. One of Huston's fields is about 115 acres but has three roll numbers, meaning he had to dig 15 holes on those acres. In total, he had to scout about 900 acres....

"Estimates are that 80% to 90% of farmers had not submitted any neonic documents by late January. Farmers that don't use neonic seed don't need to fill out forms, which are submitted online or given to their seed dealer.

"Pioneer sales rep Leo Guilbeault spent about three hours on paperwork for his almost 2,000 acres, but said it's taking more time to help customers.

"'I was surprised how many guys out there hadn't even heard of it,' he said. 'I've done mine, but everybody else needs help, so that's even more work. That's my project for the whole month of February. We try to encourage everybody to get it done now because it's easier now when we have time to deal with it than come springtime when everybody is in more of a hurry and the last thing you want to do is sit at a desk filling in paperwork when you can be outside in the workshop....'

"Guilbeault said this is a good time to be doing the paperwork, before planting season begins.

"'We can't legally deliver their seeds until they deliver us the paperwork,' he said. 'It's in our best interests to make sure that gets done. I don't want to have to deal with that in the spring when it's seed delivery time.'

"GFO chair Mark Brock still had to do about half the paperwork at the start of February. He estimated it would take about six to 10 hours, or a 40-hour week when you add in the scouting for pests."

Speaker, I think this example speaks clearly to the need for this government to stop legislating from the Queen's Park bubble and make a concerted effort to actually understand the impact that their regulations will have. On the neonics issue, I'd like to remind the government, in particular, that it was a downtown Toronto

Minister of the Environment who legislated this on farmers across the province. I think this article summed up the struggles best. And the Minister of the Environment who was that minister is out somewhere advocating for this probably across the country.

As I said, governments need to stop legislating from the Queen's Park bubble so they can understand the impact that their regulations are having on everyday people.

You can almost liken the trend this article speaks to as being similar to the Laffer curve: When regulatory compliance becomes too demanding, compliance may very well drop off. That's not in anyone's interest either. It's why transparency and accountability are so important. It helps get the buy-in that leads to actual compliance.

1710

One of the measures proposed in Bill 154 proposes a small measure of increased transparency by mandating that associated costs of new regulations will be published when a proposed regulatory requirement is posted to the regulatory registry. This is another case where most people probably assumed that the economic impact of a government proposal would exist and be available when that regulation is published for public comment, but somehow this is a brand new concept for this current government.

I have questions around this for the minister, though: how comprehensive this evaluation of costs might be, for example. When these sorts of numbers come from the government, with often a significant gap between what is projected and what the reality is, does the time it takes to ensure compliance have any weight, for example? Filling out a form might look like the cost of paper, but it can represent hours and hours of productive time lost, as we heard in the article that I just read.

To be credible, this needs to be transparent. If there's one thing this government needs, it's more transparency. I've long called on this ministry to become more transparent when it comes to handing out billions of dollars in corporate grants, and I've been on the record demanding that this Liberal government release all corporate grant recipients going back to 2004. We're still continuing that fight, but I would urge the Premier to release all corporate grants in this province so people can see who got that money—not just economic development grants, but grants handed out for the purpose through ministries such as Northern Development, and Agriculture and Rural Affairs. There's a lot of money that flows out of the government and into private sector hands with very little to no accountability.

Of course, one of the reasons is because we know, according to the Auditor General, that 80% of the money that was given to corporations by the economic development ministry was done on an invitation-only basis. Bureaucrats or politicians were inviting companies to apply for corporate grants. We still don't know how that process unfolded. The government has not been forthcoming about how companies were selected, and as far as I know, there have been no changes to that process

since the Auditor General's report. Then, secondly, 96% of all that money has been given out to corporations that are the largest and most successful companies in Ontario. We need transparency as well when it comes to corporate grants handed out by the Liberals.

Meanwhile in the public sector, there's an example out of Caledon that I know our leader has mentioned, but I don't think we can overemphasize how absurd this situation is. The Winston Churchill road bridge, or large box culvert, needed replacing. To accomplish this—what you assume would be a straightforward project, replacing a bridge that already exists—the government required EA studies that cost \$800,000. The government required a study that cost \$800,000; the construction itself was only \$600,000. Does that sound like a good use of infrastructure money?

A related concern was brought to my attention around the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment, or MCEA process. I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has had this issue brought to him as well, but unfortunately nothing has really been done to address these concerns. By way of explanation, MCEAs are required for infrastructure projects such as new local roads, widening roads, cycling lanes, bridge replacements, culverts, sewer systems and new or altered traffic intersections.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario has been sounding the alarm on this expensive and time-consuming process for years. I will share with the House the results of the independent research reports they commissioned on whether the MCEAs are worthwhile. They found three areas of major concern.

The first one was cost: A class EA report's price tripled in many places, rising to about \$386,500, up from \$113,300 four years previously.

Time: It took 26.7 months to go through the process, seven months longer than it took four years previously.

Duplication: Some projects can have two public consultation processes, one through the Planning Act and the second through the MCEA process, extending construction timelines unnecessarily.

As a result, RCCAO is teaming up with the Municipal Engineers Association to prepare a section 61 Environmental Bill of Rights application to be submitted to Ontario's Environmental Commissioner for consideration. With results like this, I think the onus is on the ministry to show that this process is effective.

AMO recently conducted a test case in the city of London, attempting to alleviate the burden of lengthy environmental approvals. They described the repercussions of that burden in their report, saying, "To enable expansion of commercial enterprises and residential construction, physical infrastructure is a pre-condition. Since in business, 'time is money,' inordinate and unnecessary delays discourage business investment.

"Delays in securing ECAs result in costly delays and carrying costs for those developing properties for commercial purposes. Delays also mean deferring the date on which economic activity begins and new or expanded

properties are added to the tax rolls. In the case of residential and mixed-use developments, delays reduce the supply of new housing and construction sector employment."

The solution they devised was as follows: "The strategy combined improving internal processes, engaging applicants at an early stage, and finally, working with Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change officials to expand the scope of delegation to city staff by the MOECC....

"If the application meets statutory and operational conditions, the municipality's professional staff prepares a 'draft certificate of approval' supporting the application. Municipal officials then submit the application with a 'letter of recommendation' to the MOECC for final processing and approval. In this process, municipalities recommend but do not approve ECAs. The ministry retains authority for issuing ECA approvals under the OWRA and the EPA. However, the technical review is done locally, thus reducing the burden on MOECC staff and accelerating the MOECC phase of the process....

"As a result, the waiting time for ECAs on good development proposals is reduced for business applicants from as much as 36 weeks for 'direct submission' applications, to an average of four weeks for 'transfer of review' applications, a time saving of 32 weeks, or nearly 90%."

So we've got these different groups and stakeholders coming to the government not just with red tape problems but with solutions to those problems in hand, and they're still going nowhere. Stakeholders have actually written to the minister to clearly voice the frustration they have about this not being dealt with for years on end. I would like to quote from this letter, Speaker:

"As you know, the Auditor General's 2016 annual report contained a value-for-money audit of environmental assessments. Bonnie Lysyk pointed out that an EA advisory panel made recommendations for reform in 2005 but that these had not been acted upon. Expectations are thus high that tangible action will be taken now."

It's an example of why I'm skeptical about the government enacting the measures included in this bill, Bill 154. Here is a problem that concerned parties have been telling the Liberal government about since they got into office, but they're still waiting for action—nearly 15 years.

The same letter highlights concerns around delays in completing part II order or bump-up requests related to MCEA projects. It goes on to say:

"In 2014, our data show that the ministry took 148 to 561 days to review bump-up requests for MCEA projects. This is unacceptable, particularly when the province has for many years boasted that it is making strides to modernize approvals. Clearly this challenge has not been meaningfully addressed by MOECC. Part II order delays add an extra year or more in many cases as the completion of public consultation and final report often takes more than two years to complete. An im-

provement such as a bridge replacement to comply with current transportation safety standards could mean a continuation of unacceptable safety risks to the public or delays in access to emergency services and goods movement. Delays to these types of municipal infrastructure projects also prohibit community-building efforts and diminish economic activity. When projects finally do proceed, the cost of the project often increases, thereby necessitating further delays to obtain council approval for additional capital funds.”

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With those types of concerns on the table, I think the minister owes a fulsome explanation for why he is maintaining the status quo. If the way the MCEA process is currently functioning is somehow the best possible solution in his mind or the ministry's mind, then he needs to look for ways to expedite it and he needs to be up front with the parties in the communities that are fed up with what they see as needless delays and red tape.

I think this is also probably an example of why we need to pare down red tape to free up resources for enforcement and administration of the really necessary regulations. The reality which underpins all of this is the debt that this government has run up. The province's debt has surpassed \$300 billion for the first time in Ontario's history. It has been said many times before, but it's worth saying again that we are now the most indebted sub-sovereign borrower. There isn't a state or province in the world that owes as much as we do here in Ontario.

The interest payments on the debt alone are costing almost \$1 billion each and every month. That is money taken from families and businesses which they can no longer use to invest in growth or even just to cover rising electricity bills. This reality is distorting our economic decisions. It lays a punishing weight on both families and businesses. It's something I know my constituents feel, whether at home or at work, from higher prices for gasoline to more expensive natural gas to rising licence fees.

I've talked a lot about the costs that red tape imposes on business, but it's important to note as well this takes a toll on family budgets. Ultimately, whatever costs red tape imposes on businesses, it trickles down to individuals, whether it's through wage stagnation or increased product prices. Sometimes government is taking money directly from citizens' pockets. We always have to be conscientious that there is one taxpayer, and however money is collected or wasted, it's coming from the same place.

CFIB has done a report on this as well. I'm just going to read you some points from their summary:

“From filing taxes to applying for government permits, how much does red tape cost you? Our report quantifies, for the first time, the cost of some of the most common red tape headaches for ordinary Canadians.

“At least \$10 billion a year, and a lot of stress. The report entitled *Impact of Regulation on Canadian Individuals* for the first time quantifies the cost of the most common red tape headaches faced by ordinary

Canadians. The \$10-billion figure takes into account the following:

“—complying with personal income tax obligations (\$6.7 billion, excluding actual taxes paid);

“—applying for and renewing passports (\$645 million);

“—applying for and renewing driver's licences and vehicle registrations (\$1.7 billion); and

“—time spent complying with these and other regulatory obligations (excluding personal income taxes).

“Businesses and consumers alike are both affected by red tape. Government rules, permits and paperwork are involved in everything from renovating a home to applying for a student loan to going fishing. CFIB has previously pegged the direct cost of regulation on Canadian businesses at \$31 billion per year. The data on cost to individuals begins to provide a fuller picture of the total cost of regulation for Canadians.

“The report also includes a public opinion poll in which almost half of the respondents said that excessive regulation adds significant stress to their lives.”

I don't see this government doing anything to address this. Taxes and fees have been going up: From licences to natural gas bills to fuel for people's cars, people are paying more and getting less.

CFIB is talking about Canadians in that report, but, again, there's only one taxpayer, and they deserve to have government give consideration to the economic reality that they're actually facing.

I want to circle back to my primary concern with this bill, which is that there's no mechanism in this piece of legislation for ensuring that follow-through will be here. I'd very much like to hear from the government how they plan to track the impact of this bill's directives: the requirement of \$1.25 in savings be found for every \$1 in new regulatory costs; sensitivity to small business resource limitations; greater harmonization with national and international standards; rewarding compliance; and increasing the validation of electronic document filing and communications.

I'd like to hear from the government how they plan to get ministry staff engaged on these initiatives. How will we know what results they're yielding across different ministries? These are very common-sense policies, and the fact that they weren't already in place makes me wonder how entrenched the current culture is within the bureaucracy. What efforts is the Ministry of Economic Development going to make to ensure there is uptake? I know the minister is finished with his lead, but I think it would be very reassuring to hear from the government about what the next steps will be if this bill is enacted.

Ontario is succeeding because of its people. We succeed because of our people. We know it here in this House and we see it in our ridings. We hear that from Ed Clark, who that said the people of this province are its best asset and the greatest enticement we can offer Amazon. You hear it from Forbes, which highlighted that Toronto has “some of the world's best and brightest innovators.”

This government should not take our human capital for granted. When Alberta was booming, we were losing a lot of talented and hard-working people who decided to head west. Human capital is mobile. It can sustain prosperity for a time, but it's not fixed, and the government should not confuse the success it brings with sound economic policy.

I'm honoured to do my one-hour lead on behalf of the PC caucus. I look forward to the debate in the days ahead on this bill. I know the critic for the third party will be doing her one-hour lead shortly.

I would encourage the government to really think outside of the bubble of Queen's Park. Again, coming from a small business background, like some of my colleagues, when you're sitting at this desk at Queen's Park, you don't realize the burden of red tape and how it impacts businesses out there. It really reduces the amount of people that small businesses hire. It hamstring businesses across the province. They could be spending time selling more products or exporting products to other countries. But this is a serious issue in Ontario, with nearly 400,000 regulations on the books. For this piece of legislation to reduce \$6 million to \$9 million in red-tape costs is a drop in the bucket.

I would encourage the government to get serious about this and to, quite frankly, go further, to make Ontario the best place to do business, to create employment, to expand business, to sell products around the world, because we do have the best workers here in the province of Ontario. We need to unleash the full potential of our job creators and those workers in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to commend the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He did almost a full hour on Bill 154. While we disagree significantly on parts of it, I do think that we were able to actually find some consensus at committee. In fact, they moved an amendment around addressing the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, which actually has been on the books now for two or three years. We definitely would have supported that change because it would have reduced and streamlined motor vehicle licensing in the province of Ontario. So there are some common areas. However, schedule 4 is a non-starter for us.

The member also said that we share the concern around lack of enforcement. You only have to look at last week's report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario where she says that the Ontario government must tackle pollution affecting indigenous communities. This government has done such a poor, failing—epic fail, actually—job on protecting the basic human rights of indigenous people in the province of Ontario. She goes on to say that the government should “make environmental justice part of its reconciliation with indigenous peoples....”

“The Ontario government has long turned a blind eye to pollution that adversely affects many indigenous communities,” stated the commissioner. For over 60

years, the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations, northwest of Dryden, have suffered devastating effects from mercury poisoning....

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“The commissioner's report highlights how the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry ... is failing to protect species at risk, like the Algonquin wolf. ‘It's illegal to kill threatened species in Ontario, but the MNRF has decided to strip the Algonquin wolf of this protection in much of its habitat.’”

So we have regulations on the books that this government can't even ensure are put in place, are monitored, are honoured. And yet here you go: You're going to try to take one regulation off for another—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the member opposite from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for weighing in on this debate this afternoon with his hour-long debate.

He and his party talk about how important they think reducing red tape is. We'd like to believe them, Mr. Speaker, but we don't know where their plan is. We've been waiting for their plan.

In the meantime, this government has saved businesses \$152 million and 5.4 million hours. We've actually cut, as I said earlier in my debate, close to 80,000 regulatory burdens.

The member also spoke about the OCC, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. The OCC actually supports this bill. I'm going to read their statement:

“Bill 154 makes significant strides to reduce input costs and provide modernized regulatory provisions which support success and prosperity for businesses of all sizes. Building on the success of the Red Tape Challenge, this legislation demonstrates a positive commitment to ensure continued competitiveness and prosperity of business in our province. Ontario's business environment fosters an economy which is innovative, internationally competitive and consistently adapting to the challenges and opportunities presented through the changing business environment. However, to remain competitive, the government of Ontario must continually seek opportunities to update and modernize business regulations which promote business success and growth, develop the skills of our workforce and incentivize innovation. Altogether, this will help to ensure Ontario maintains and improves its status as leaders in the world economy.”

This is full, 100% support by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce of this bill.

I look forward to this bill passing here in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to provide comment and thank my colleague Monte from—where is it?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Bill Walker: —Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, for a great hour's debate. Well, he left a minute on the clock, but I'll make that up for him here in a short time.

I want to reference a few things that the member from Davenport said, because she brought up a plan. I can tell you that when we do this, and when we bring in bills like this, we will not raise hydro rates 300% and then try to give 25% of their own money back to the taxpayers and tell them, "This is all swimmingly good in the world. Just trust us: We're really good at this."

We will not sell something like Hydro One, when 85% of the people of Ontario said, "Do not do this. Do not sell a government entity like this."

We will not triple the debt to \$330 billion, like this government did, and put it on the backs of our pages.

We will not play a shell game with finances. The Auditor General came out and said that there is no way that they should be doing this. This is just moving debt from one entity to another. It's going to cost \$25 billion, which they found overnight, but they couldn't find things for mental health. They're still going to close 600 schools. They are totally demoralizing the people across our province. So we won't do those types of things.

They have over 380,000 rules and regulations. They like to talk about regulations. What we want to say is that red tape is something that is not providing value. It's not a regulation. No one's arguing that regulations aren't needed, but when there's onerous red tape that's not doing anything to benefit people's health, safety and well-being, then we need to get rid of those.

They have already challenged our businesses with the highest hydro rates in the country. They're now bringing in legislation that is going to increase the costs and expenditures again for our businesses.

Red tape is yet one more thing that is making it more challenging for businesses of all kinds and all sizes across our great province to thrive. We want to ensure that we're putting in the environment so that businesses truly can thrive, and we'll make those changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House. Today I'll make some comments in response to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. I always get a kick out of people talking in this House—this place is all about creating laws and red tape, and everybody is arguing about who can get rid of it faster.

The issue isn't about what is red tape and what isn't; the issue is whether we can make regulations that actually do what regulations are supposed to do, and that is, protect people and allow business to flourish and allow people to flourish—but in the end, protect people. That's what regulations are for.

The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex spent a lot of time talking about something that is near and dear to me: neonicotinoid regulations on farms. I don't think anyone is arguing that there shouldn't be a very strong regulatory regime for any type of pesticide. The issue is, does that

suite of regulations work? It's very questionable whether that suite actually works, whether all the things farmers are having to do—whether that actually has a purpose other than just filling out paper. That is the issue, and that's something that this government has failed on time and time again, because instead of listening to the people who are actually working in their fields, be it mines, mills, forests, computer companies, wherever—these companies and these individuals all need regulation for their benefit as well, because good regulation sorts out the bad actors in every industry. The people in industry and, I know, the people in the farming sector depend on regulations to make sure that everything is on the up and up. But those regulations have to work. That's something that we, in these hallowed halls, particularly right now—because they're the government in power—aren't that good at. That's something that the next government has to improve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can now reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thanks to the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Davenport, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I'll try to make sure that I don't leave a minute on the clock this time—and to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and to all of my colleagues in the House who actually stayed here while I spoke for 59 minutes on this bill.

I've been pretty clear where I come from on this. I think we need less government in Ontario. I think we need less regulation. I think we need lower taxes. I think we'll have more jobs in the province if we free the business community. If we can unleash their potential, it will create thousands of jobs across this province. We need to get government out of the way.

This bill, quite frankly—and I said this during second reading, not today: I think this government could look at another Liberal government in British Columbia. They repealed legislation to reduce red tape. I forget the amount of pieces of legislation that Premier Clark repealed, but they did a great job. I think we could borrow off of what they did in British Columbia. I think they have the best debt-to-GDP ratio as well. Their economy is growing.

I would just urge this government to do more. As I said, \$6 million to \$9 million is a drop in the bucket when the economy is faced with about \$15 billion annually in red tape costs.

There are many common-sense solutions that we hear about at home, in our own ridings, when we're going along Main Street. I spent a day, a couple of weeks ago, in Strathroy just going to say hi to local businesses. I hear the best ideas from home that we should be bringing to Queen's Park to champion on their behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Who doesn't want to be debating red tape on a Monday afternoon—for only 20 minutes? I'm pleased to start my one-hour lead, and I suspect I get

the pleasure and the privilege of finishing that tomorrow morning.

It has been a really interesting debate, I think. As we are six months out from an election, there is this tendency to try to pigeonhole people in certain places, but there is a genuine and sincere difference of opinion on how we see regulations and the role that those regulations play.

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My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane correctly outlined how I genuinely feel about it. There is a time and a place for regulations: to keep people safe, to bear witness to those regulations which actually prevent people from getting hurt in the workplace—to basic health and safety, which we've seen serious violations of in the province of Ontario. Look how long it took for us to get the working-at-heights regulations passed. I've just given you a good example of the environmental regulations that have not been upheld in the province of Ontario. Environmental and health regulations—everything—there is a time and a place for regulation.

Of this Bill 154, I have to tell you, we support the vast majority of the reductions in the regulatory burdens in this because many of them simply did not make sense. But schedule 4 is a non-starter. That is where the tension between the responsibility to business far surpasses—and, I would even say, trumps—the public interest. In schedule 4, in particular, we take issue with sections 2, 4, 7 and 8—and the last-minute amendment that was brought to the committee was just that: It was an afterthought. This poses a very serious concern for us.

I think that the government has genuinely underestimated the concern on the part of the public with regard to how regulatory offsets will happen. Much of it is left, ironically, to cabinet and to regulation. There is such a lack of clarity in the legislation, in the law. And they point to the preamble, even. Just as a reminder, the preamble is a part of a law, but the substantive obligations are in the body of the legislation. This preamble does not contain enforceable rules.

You have a government that says, "This is what we're going to do," and then it's our job as the opposition members to say, "Well, this is what you're not even doing right now." How can we have any faith or trust, as you go forward with a vacuous piece of a section that says, "We're going to make sure that the environment is protected and health and safety guidelines are upheld," when we have so many examples that exist today where that promise is not being kept?

I do think that the government bringing forward this incredibly large piece of legislation and embedding schedule 4 in it is a huge concern. As it plays itself out in the province of Ontario—and I sincerely hope that I'm wrong, actually, on this, because when the health and safety of the citizens whom we serve are compromised because of a government that's looking to have the optics of responding to legislation and regulation, then we compromise the trust and the confidence of the people in the province.

I did receive this one comment from a constituent who felt very strongly. It's from Michael, and he says, "If ever there was evidence to prove that the Liberals' so-called progressive veneer is nothing but, schedule 4 of Bill 154 should be it. Bill 154 is the cutting red tape bill, a suspect enterprise in itself, but schedule 4 is something that would make even Mike Harris blush."

In a nutshell, if passed, schedule 4 will make it mandatory that, going forward, whenever the government brings in a new regulation or reviews an already existing regulation, they will have to do a formal assessment of the costs that would be imposed on a private for-profit business, publish that assessment and then relieve the business of that cost and more by creating an offset, usually in the form of eliminating another regulation.

At committee, when we had a number of environmental and legal experts come to the committee and specifically address schedule 4, I have to say that it's astounding to hear the Minister of Economic Development and Growth dismiss those concerns out of hand and say that they are "off-base." All of the people who came before us at the committee presented research and evidence, and—this may be of interest to some of the Liberal government members—pointed to examples under the Progressive Conservative Party and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves's government which reduced the regulations in certain sectors. People suffered because of it. I know that they would like to put that behind them, but you can't really put it behind you if you're going to replicate the same mistake today. That's an important lesson, I think, for all of us.

So for those of you who are tuning in—my folks, primarily, watch this channel—Bill 154 is a follow-up to the Burden Reduction Act, itself a result of the Red Tape Challenge. It's mostly the result of the findings of the Business Law Advisory Council—mostly. It's an omnibus bill, which this government has become very fond of.

If schedule 4 had been pulled and dealt with separately, I guarantee that it would have received more attention. While most of the omnibus bill is benign, there are serious concerns about schedule 4, the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, 2017. These concerns are shared not only by us—because I know that it's easy to say, "Oh, New Democrats hate all regulation." That's completely untrue; there's a time and a place.

The organizations that came forward are numerous: the Canadian Environmental Law Association; Environmental Defence; CUPE presented a legal opinion, which I'm going to be referencing later—which we very much appreciate; tomorrow I'm going to be talking at length about the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and their concerns with schedule 4 of Bill 154; the Ontario Federation of Labour; the Toronto Environmental Alliance; Earthroots; the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Greenpeace; Northwatch; LEAF; Ecojustice; Ontario Nature; and last, but certainly not least, the Pembina Institute. So Bill 154 doesn't just affect one or two stakeholder groups. This isn't a special-interest pushback

on Bill 154, and it doesn't just affect workers, teachers or tradespeople. Bill 154 affects everyone who lives in the province of Ontario.

Before I move on with talking about some of the concerns that we have around the offset versus the public interest, I do want to thank Emily Trudeau from my office—she did a great amount of the research that I'm going to be referencing—as well as Ana Qarri, who's the OLIP intern in my office. That's a great program, the OLIP internship program. I just want to say, with some humility, she's my fifth intern in five years. That's quite an accomplishment because they interview us, as you know, Mr. Speaker. They get to choose who they're going to work with.

I think as we look holistically at this piece of legislation, there was this moment after the 2014 election where the Premier talked about leading from the activist centre and being open and transparent, and trying to rebuild trust in government. Schedule 4 of Bill 154 compromises everything that the Premier said at that time.

I'm going to read from a Toronto Star article from today, October 30: "Ontario Plan to Cut Red Tape Could Create New Risks, Critics Say." This was an open letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne that says that a bill that "would reduce regulations for businesses could have a downside for public health and the environment." This was done by Ainslie Cruickshank.

It goes on to say: "Sixteen environmental and labour organizations, including several based in Toronto, are raising 'profound concerns' that proposed provincial legislation aiming to reduce red tape could have unforeseen consequences for human and environmental health in Ontario.

"Although there's some nice rhetoric in the preamble, in the substance of the bill it seems to be privileging economy over the environment," said Keith Brooks, the programs director of the Toronto-based organization Environmental Defence."

The Minister of Economic Development, who I do want to thank for his years of service—I haven't had a chance to do that. But we fundamentally disagree on schedule 4, for sure. He says that those concerns are "off-base." I think that the evidence that these environmental and legal groups came to us and demonstrated are valid points.

He goes on to say that, "Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, has passed through committee and is now awaiting third reading"—we're having this process right now. It obviously amends several acts and enacts a number of new ones aimed at reducing regulatory burdens.

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"In an open letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne, the environmental groups outlined their concerns with schedule four of the bill, which—if passed—will require ministries to assess and offset the administrative costs to business of any new regulations. For any \$1 of new costs, ministries would have to establish an offset of \$1.25."

This actually has been tried in other jurisdictions. The federal government under Stephen Harper tried this. Donald Trump—one of his first acts that he took on was to bring in a similar piece of legislation.

"According to an amendment to the bill"—which we heard about earlier from the minister, who said it wasn't even necessary—"made by committee last week, if any offsets to new regulations are established by removing a pre-existing regulation, officials would have to consider the protections of the public interest, including health, safety and the environment before removing a pre-existing regulation." But we also heard that this was left to the LG and to cabinet to determine.

"The change, though, doesn't go far enough for Ramani Nadarajah, a lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association." This is what she says about the last-minute amendment to Bill 154: "I don't think the amendment addresses our concerns.... If the government had wanted to ensure that Bill 154 did not result in the deregulation of public interest regulations, it should have granted an outright exemption for regulations dealing with public health and safety and the environment."

"While Brooks"—who I've already referenced—"said the amendment is a 'step in the right direction' and should protect against the removal of existing regulations that protect the public interest to make space for new regulations, he's concerned it doesn't address the larger concern that the clause will create a regulatory chill within government."

He goes on to explain what happens when addressing regulations becomes so onerous: "'A requirement to find offsets is a deterrent to enacting new regulations,' he said, adding 'an independent inquiry found that this type of chill contributed to the Walkerton drinking water crisis.'"

Just for those people who don't know, because I think it is important to remember, "In May 2000 the drinking water in the small southwestern Ontario town became contaminated with E. coli killing seven people and leaving more than 2,300 ill." Some of those people still, to this day, suffer from that contamination.

"The public inquiry that followed found that a Progressive Conservative government policy, which required officials to conduct a cost-benefit analysis before implementing any new regulations, was partly to blame for why the government failed to implement a regulation requiring private water labs to quickly notify public authorities of adverse test results in municipal water supplies."

This also had to do with the privatization of public services, which the Progressive Conservative government has agreed is their preferred policy. They believe that private organizations and businesses can deliver public services. But what we didn't know at that time is that the Liberal government, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, was going to double-down on the privatization of public services and even accelerate it in many regards.

New Democrats think very strongly that this should serve as a cautionary tale. We should bear witness to the past and learn from the past and then not go forward in that same direction. I think that as legislators we actually have that responsibility to do that.

It is interesting, though, how this bill has evolved and how the narrative around it has been created, because earlier, people were shaking their fingers at us and, in many respects, were sort of dismissing the environmental concerns that came forward through the committee. During committee hearings through last week, we heard time and time again from the government members that the preamble of schedule 4 clearly stated the intention of the bill. As I've just told you, the preamble is a part of the law but the substantive obligations are in the body of the legislation. I think that, while the preamble to this legislation says one thing, the bill opens the door to compromise and undermines that preamble and that intention.

Before the bill went to committee, there was nothing at all in the actual bill that mentioned anything about protecting the health and safety of Ontarians, of workers, of the environment—nothing.

In section 2 of schedule 4, which is where many of the concerns are based, it didn't mention the public interest at all when it determined massive regulatory changes. Section 2 states, "Where a regulation governed by this act is made or approved and has the effect of creating or increasing one or more administrative costs, a prescribed offset must be made within a prescribed time after the regulation is made or approved."

So there are unanswered questions. This is as clear as mud, right? These unanswered questions are a serious concern for Ontario's New Democrats because we like to see the details in the legislation. What is considered to be a suitable "prescribed offset"? Who sets that? What's the definition of that? What is a suitable "prescribed time"? The minister says up to two years. What if they need three years? What if they need two weeks? What is the suitable prescribed period of time? Who has confidence in this government to determine that? What constitutes an "administrative cost"? Who gets to determine what those administrative costs are? Are these standards going to remain consistent across government ministries, or will

they inadvertently create more red tape from one ministry to another ministry because this government has failed to address the siloing of initiatives across this government? We received no answers to any of these questions, and that's what leaves us genuinely concerned.

For example, if a new regulation is put in place to protect our drinking water, which already existing regulation is going to be removed in order to create that offset? What does that process look like? Is it just going to be people sitting around the cabinet table saying, "Well, I'll give you this one if you take away that one"? We shouldn't be bartering with regulations, especially when it deals with the health and safety of the people of this province whom we serve.

So section 2 of schedule 4 raises serious concerns for us. The offsets are not designed to protect the public interest. There's no guidelines or clarity around that. They prioritize cost savings over people, over health and safety, over the environment. This is the concern that we have. This is the concern that we brought to the government. This is the concern that many of the groups that came before us brought to the government.

We tried to actually pull schedule 4 out of this legislation, and we would be supportive of it then. We would have been supportive of the PC motion to try to address, as I mentioned, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act and try to streamline that. So we are not against reducing regulations that don't make sense, but we are fully in support of regulations that protect the health, the safety and the environment in the province of Ontario. Schedule 4 definitely leaves the door open to further degradation of the oversight of the regulations that we already have in the province, as well as the creation of new regulations and offsetting through a process which is not clear to us.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm going to be continuing this debate tomorrow morning. Do I have to wait for you to stand up, or can I just get out of here? Is that possible?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you for the opening.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley